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THE BOOK OF POETRY

BRITISH POETS

PAGES 2217 TO 2550

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THE BOOK OF POETRY

Collected from the Whole Field
of British and American Poetry.
Also Translations of Important
Poems from Foreign Languages.

Selected and Annotated
with an Introduction by
EDWIN MARKHAM

WITHDRAWN

*Poetry fettered,
fetters the human race.*

—William Blake.

VOLUME VIII

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CONTENTS

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

My Garden 2217

Vespers 2217

OWEN MEREDITH (ROBERT BULWER LYTTON)

Aux Italiens 2218

A Night in Italy 2222

King Solomon 2226

LEWIS CARROLL

The Walrus and the Carpenter 2230

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

After Death in Arabia 2234

He and She 2237

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

The Coming of Love 2241

Wassail Chorus at the Mermaid Tavern . . . 2242

JAMES THOMSON

The City of Dreadful Night 2245

RODEN NOEL

Song of The Water-Nymph 2252

Beethoven 2254

WILLIAM MORRIS

A Garden by the Sea 2257

Love Is Enough 2259

The Idle Singer 2259

Atalanta's Race 2260

Ladies' Gard 2265

The Voice of Toil 2267

The Day Is Coming 2269

The March of the Workers 2273

The Haystack in the Floods 2274

LORD DE TABLEY	
The Study of a Spider	2280
Orestes	2281
ALFRED AUSTIN	
Elegy	2283
Primroses	2284
W. S. GILBERT	
To the Terrestrial Globe	2286
ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE	
The Hounds of Spring	2289
The Life of Man	2291
The Death of Meleager	2293
Love and Love's Mates	2300
Hertha	2300
Ave atque Vale	2309
The Triumph of Time	2317
The Garden of Proserpine	2321
The Last Oracle	2325
In the Bay	2330
Mater Dolorosa	2341
Mater Triumphalis	2344
Prelude to "Tristram of Lyonesse"	2347
A Match	2351
Rondel	2353
Cor Cordium	2354
A Ballad of François Villon	2354
On the Monument Erected to Mazzini at Genoa	2356
On the Deaths of Thomas Carlyle and George Eliot	2358
William Shakespeare	2359
Children	2359
Étude Realiste	2360
DAVID GRAY	
In the Shadows	2362

AUSTIN DOBSON

Triolet	2364
A Fancy from Fontenelle	2364
A Song of the Four Seasons	2365
Good-Night, Babette!	2366
Ars Vivtrix	2369
In After Days	2371

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT

Laughter and Death	2371
The Sublime	2372

STANYAN BIGG

Night and the Soul	2374
------------------------------	------

THOMAS HARDY

An Ancient to Ancients	2378
The Blinded Bird	2380
In the Moonlight	2381
In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"	2382
She Hears the Storm	2383
Four Footprints	2383
The Man He Killed	2384
The Carrier	2385

ROBERT BUCHANAN

The Ballad of Judas Iscariot	2386
--	------

F. W. H. MYERS

The Inner Light	2393
---------------------------	------

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

The Music-Makers	2395
Song	2396

ANDREW LANG

The Odyssey	2397
Lost Love	2398
Ballade of Blue China	2399

ROBERT BRIDGES

I Have Loved Flowers that Fade	2401
--	------

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON	
A Flight from Glory	2402
Baudelaire	2402
Ipsissimus	2403
Idle Charon	2407
WILLIAM CANTON	
A New Poet	2408
The Crow	2409
GRANT ALLEN	
A Prayer	2410
WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY	
The Night Cat	2411
The Wind-Fiend	2412
Invictus	2414
Margarita Sorori	2414
Or Ever the Knightly Years Were Gone . .	2415
Before	2416
England, My England	2417
The Blackbird	2419
EDMUND GOSSE	
Revelation	2420
Impression	2421
Ballade of Dead Cities	2422
CHARLOTTE MEW	
The Farmer's Bride	2424
PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON	
No Death	2426
ISABELLA VALANCY CRAWFORD	
The Rose	2427
ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON	
Requiem	2429
Evensong	2429
If This Were Faith	2430
My Wife	2431
The Celestial Surgeon	2432

Youth and Love	2432
The Vagabond	2433
THEOPHILE MARZIALS	
A Tragedy	2435
ANONYMOUS	
The Poem of West Ham	2436
Remonstrance With the Snails	2438
FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON	
The Night Has a Thousand Eyes	2440
ALICE MEYNELL	
The Thrush Before Dawn	2441
Renouncement	2442
To a Daisy	2443
WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND	
Little Bateese	2444
OSCAR WILDE	
Sonnet to Liberty	2448
Hélas	2448
The Ballad of Reading Gaol	2449
On the Recent Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters	2471
Theocritus	2472
Requiescat	2473
To Milton	2474
WILLIAM SHARP (FIONA MACLEOD)	
The Wasp	2475
Empire (Persepolis)	2476
The Tryst of Queen Hynde	2476
Susurro	2478
The Vision	2479
MARGARET L. WOODS	
To the Forgotten Dead	2479
JOHN DAVIDSON	
Spring Song	2483
Song	2484

A Northern Suburb	2484
St. George's Day	2485
Piper, Play!	2486
A Ballad of a Nun	2488
A Ballad of Heaven	2494
Man as God	2498
Holiday at Hampton Court	2498
WILLIAM WATSON	
Song	2501
Ode in May	2501
The Sovereign Poet	2503
World-Strangeness	2504
Epigram	2504
History	2505
The Turk in Armenia	2505
To the Sultan	2506
Wordsworth's Grave	2507
After Reading "Tamburlaine the Great"	2514
Shelley and Harriet Westbrook	2514
Shelley's Centenary	2514
The Woman With the Serpent's Tongue	2518
Criticism	2519
The Prince's Quest	2520
A. E. HOUSMAN	
With Rue My Heart Is Laden	2521
Loveliest of Trees	2521
When I Was One-and-Twenty	2522
Reveille	2523
A Voice from a Grave	2523
A Look into Water	2525
Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries	2525
Tell Me Not Here	2526
Be Still, My Soul	2527
Chorus	2528
Fancy's Knell	2529

FRANCIS THOMPSON

The Hound of Heaven 2532
Daisy 2538
Arab Love-Song 2540
To a Snow-Flake 2541
In No Strange Land 2542
To Olivia 2543
Sister Songs 2543

ERNEST RHYS

Dagonet's Canzonet 2546
Words 2547

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

The Deserted City 2548
The Wrestler 2549



BRITISH POETS

FROM 1830

. TO 1860

THOMAS EDWARD BROWN

ENGLAND, 1830-1897

My Garden

A GARDEN is a lovesome thing, God wot!
Rose plot,
Fringed pool,
Ferned grot—
The veriest school
Of peace; and yet the fool
Contends that God is not.
Not God in gardens when the eve is cool?
Nay, but I have a sign:
’Tis very sure God walks in mine.

Vespers

*Many have sung of birds; but who has ever before, with
one touch, so revealed the luminous ecstasy of the bird?
This is one of the immortal lyrics.*

O BLACKBIRD, what a boy you are!
How you do go it,
Blowing your bugle to that one sweet star—
How you do blow it!

And does she hear you, blackbird boy, so far?
Or is it wasted breath?
“Good Lord, she is so bright tonight!”
The blackbird saith.

OWEN MEREDITH (ROBERT BULWER LYTTON)

ENGLAND, 1831—1891

ALTHOUGH Lytton was appointed Viceroy of India in 1876, and was the author of many important reforms, he valued himself much more as a poet than as a man of affairs. He had a facility in verse writing that, coupled with a notable poetic talent, gained him a large audience, if not the critical recognition which he most coveted. Much of his writing was done under the pseudonym of "Owen Meredith." His most popular work is a sentimental narrative in verse, *Lucile*. I give some of his best shorter poems.

Aux Italiens

AT Paris it was, at the opera there;
And she looked like a queen in a book that night,
With the wreath of pearl in her raven hair,
And the brooch on her breast so bright.

Of all the operas that Verdi wrote,
The best, to my taste, is the *Trovatore*;
And Mario can soothe, with a tenor note,
The souls in purgatory.

The moon on the tower slept soft as snow;
And who was not thrilled in the strangest way,
As we heard him sing, while the gas burned low,
"*Non ti scordar di me?*"

OWEN MEREDITH

The emperor there, in his box of state,
Looked grave; as if he had just then seen
The red flag wave from the city gate,
Where his eagles in bronze had been.

The empress, too, had a tear in her eye:
You'd have said that her fancy had gone back again,
For one moment, under the old blue sky,
To the old glad life in Spain.

Well! there in our front row box we sat,
Together, my bride betrothed and I;
My gaze was fixed on my opera hat,
And hers on the stage hard by.

And both were silent, and both were sad;
Like a queen she leaned on her full white arm,
With that regal, indolent air she had;
So confident of her charm!

I have not a doubt she was thinking then
Of her former lord, good soul that he was,
Who died the richest and roundest of men,
The Marquis of Carabas.

I hope that, to get to the kingdom of heaven,
Through a needle's eye he had not to pass;
I wish him well, for the jointure given
To my lady of Carabas.

Meanwhile, I was thinking of my first love,
As I had not been thinking of aught for years;
Till over my eyes there began to move
Something that felt like tears.

OWEN MEREDITH

I thought of the dress that she wore last time,
When we stood, 'neath the cypress trees together,
In that lost land, in that soft clime,
In the crimson evening weather;

Of that muslin dress (for the eve was hot)
And her warm white neck in its golden chain;
And her full, soft hair, just tied in a knot,
And falling loose again;

And the jasmine flower in her fair young breast;
(Oh the faint, sweet smell of that jasmine flower!)
And the one bird singing alone to his nest;
And the one star over the tower.

I thought of our little quarrels and strife,
And the letter that brought me back my ring;
And it all seemed then, in the waste of life,
Such a very little thing!

For I thought of her grave below the hill,
Which the sentinel cypress tree stands over;
And I thought, "Were she only living still,
How I could forgive her and love her!"

And I swear, as I thought of her thus, in that hour,
And of how, after all, old things are best,
That I smelt the smell of that jasmine flower
Which she used to wear in her breast.

It smelt so faint, and it smelt so sweet,
It made me creep, and it made me cold!
Like the scent that steals from the crumbling sheet
Where a mummy is half unrolled.

OWEN MEREDITH

And I turned, and looked: she was sitting there,
In a dim box over the stage; and drest
In that muslin dress, with that full, soft hair,
And that jasmine in her breast!

I was here, and she was there;
And the glittering horse-shoe curved between—
From my bride betrothed, with her raven hair
And her sumptuous, scornful mien,

To my early love, with her eyes downcast,
And over her primrose face the shade,
(In short, from the future back to the past)
There was but a step to be made.

To my early love from my future bride
One moment I looked. Then I stole to the door,
I traversed the passage; and down at her side
I was sitting, a moment more.

My thinking of her, or the music's strain,
Or something which never will be exprest,
Had brought her back from the grave again,
With the jasmine in her breast.

She is not dead, and she is not wed!
But she loves me now, and she loved me then!
And the very first word that her sweet lips said,
My heart grew youthful again.

The marchioness there, of Carabas,
She is wealthy, and young, and handsome still;
And but for her . . . well, we'll let that pass;
She may marry whomever she will.

OWEN MEREDITH

But I will marry my own first love,
With her primrose face, for old things are best;
And the flower in her bosom, I prize it above
The brooch in my lady's breast.

The world is filled with folly and sin,
And love must cling where it can, I say;
For beauty is easy enough to win—
But one isn't loved every day.

And I think, in the lives of most women and men,
There's a moment when all would go smooth and even,
If only the dead could find out when
To come back and be forgiven.

But oh the smell of that jasmine flower!
And oh that music! and oh the way
That voice rang out from the donjon tower,
Non ti scordar di me,
Non ti scordar di me!

From "A Night in Italy"

This is distinctly in the early Victorian manner, and is perhaps too sentimental to meet the approval of the taste of our time. In the seventh stanza Owen Meredith opens up a thought well worth the attention of all lovers in this time and in all times.

SWEET are the rosy memories of the lips
That first kissed ours, albeit they kiss no more:
Sweet is the sight of sunset-sailing ships,
Although they leave us on a lonely shore:

OWEN MEREDITH

Sweet are familiar songs, though Music dips
Her hollow shell in Thought's forlornest wells:
And sweet, though sad, the sound of midnight bells
When the oped casement with the night-rain drips.

There is a pleasure which is born of pain:
The grave of all things hath its violet.
Else why, through days which never come again,
Roams Hope with that strange longing, like Regret:
Why put the posy in the cold dead hand?
Why plant the rose above the lonely grave?
Why bring the corpse across the salt sea-wave?
Why deem the dead more near in native land?

Thy name hath been a silence in my life
So long, it falters upon language now—
O more to me than sister or than wife
Once . . . and now—nothing! It is hard to know
That such things have been, and are not; and yet
Life loiters, keeps a pulse at even measure,
And goes upon its business and its pleasure,
And knows not all the depths of its regret. . . .

Ah, could the memory cast her spots, as do
The snake's brood theirs in spring! and be once more
Wholly renewed, to dwell i' the time that's new,
With no reiteration of those pangs of yore.
Peace, peace! My wild song will go wandering
Too wantonly, down paths a private pain
Hath trodden bare. What was it jarred the strain?
Some crushed illusion, left with crumpled wing.

Midnight, and love, and youth, and Italy!
Love in the land where love most lovely seems!
Land of my love, though I be far from thee,

OWEN MEREDITH

Lend, for love's sake, the light of thy moonbeams,
The spirit of thy cypress-groves and all
Thy dark-eyed beauty for a little while
To my desire. Yet once more let her smile
Fall o'er me: o'er me let her long hair fall. . . .

The night said not a word. The breeze was dead.
The leaf lay without whispering on the tree,
As I lay at her feet. Drooped was her head:
One hand in mine: and one still pensively
Went wandering through my hair. We were together.
How? Where? What matter? Somewhere in a
dream,
Drifting, slow drifting down a wizard stream:
Whither? Together: then what matter whither?

How little know they life's divinest bliss,
That know not to possess and yet refrain!
Let the young Psyche roam, a fleeting kiss:
Grasp it—a few poor grains of dust remain.
See how those floating flowers, the butterflies,
Hover the garden through, and take no root!
Desire for ever hath a flying foot:
Free pleasure comes and goes beneath the skies.

Close not thy hand upon the innocent joy
That trusts itself within thy reach. It may,
Or may not, linger. Thou canst but destroy
The wingèd wanderer. Let it go or stay.
Love thou the rose, yet leave it on its stem.
Think! Midas starved by turning all to gold.
Blessèd are those that spare, and that withhold,
Because the whole world shall be trusted them.

OWEN MEREDITH

The foolish Faun pursues the unwilling Nymph
That culls her flowers beside the precipice
Or dips her shining ankles in the lymph:
But, just when she must perish or be his,
Heaven puts an arm out. She is safe. The shore
Gains some new fountain; or the liliated lawn
A rarer sort of rose: but ah, poor Faun!
To thee she shall be changed for evermore.

Chase not too close the fading rapture. Leave
To Love his long auroras, slowly seen.
Be ready to release as to receive.
Deem those the nearest, soul to soul, between
Whose lips yet lingers reverence on a sigh.
Judge what thy sense can reach not, most thine own,
If once thy soul hath seized it. The unknown
Is life to love, religion, poetry.

The moon had set. There was not any light,
Save of the lonely legioned watch-stars pale
In outer air, and what by fits made bright
Hot oleanders in a rosy vale
Searched by the lamping fly, whose little spark
Went in and out, like passion's bashful hope.
Meanwhile the sleepy globe began to slope
A ponderous shoulder sunward through the dark.

And the night passed in beauty like a dream.
Aloof in those dark heavens paused Destiny,
With her last star descending in the gleam
Of the cold morrow, from the emptied sky.
The hour, the distance from her old self, all
The novelty and liveness of the place
Had left a lovely awe on that fair face,
And all the land grew strange and magical.

OWEN MEREDITH

As droops some billowy cloud to the crouched hill,
Heavy with all heaven's tears, for all earth's care,
She drooped unto me, without force or will,
And sank upon my bosom, murmuring there
A woman's inarticulate passionate words.
O moment of all moments upon earth!
O life's supreme! How worth, how wildly worth,
Whole worlds of flame, to know this world affords

What even Eternity can not restore!
When all the ends of life take hands and meet
Round centres of sweet fire. Ah, never more,
Ah never, shall the bitter with the sweet
Be mingled so in the pale after-years!
One hour of life immortal spirits possess.
This drains the world, and leaves but weariness,
And parching passion, and perplexing tears.

Sad is it, that we cannot even keep
That hour to sweeten life's last toil: but Youth
Grasps all, and leaves us: and when we would weep,
We dare not let our tears fall, lest, in truth,
They fall upon our work which must be done.
And so we bind up our torn hearts from breaking:
Our eyes from weeping, and our brows from aching:
And follow the long pathway all alone.

King Solomon

Jewish legendry was full of stories connecting King Solomon with magical powers and cabalistic symbols. On one of these legends the present poem is based. The Pentagraph (more properly Pentagram) was a five-pointed design like a star, credited with mystic significance.

OWEN MEREDITH

KING SOLOMON stood, in his crown of gold,
Between the pillars, before the altar
In the House of the Lord. And the King was old,
And his strength began to falter,
So that he leaned on his ebony staff,
Sealed with the seal of the Pentagraph.

All of the golden fretted work,
Without and within so rich and rare,
As high as the nest of the building stork,
Those pillars of cedar were—
Wrought up to the brazen chapters¹
Of the Sidonian artificers.

And the King stood still as a carven king,
The carven cedarn beams below,
In his purple robe, with his signet-ring,
And his beard as white as snow,
And his face to the Oracle,² where the hymn
Dies under the wing of the cherubim.

The wings fold over the Oracle,
And cover the heart and eyes of God:
The Spouse with pomegranate, lily and bell,³
Is glorious in her abode;
For with gold of Ophir, and scent of myrrh,
And purple of Tyre, the King clothed her.

By the soul of each slumbrous instrument
Drawn soft through the musical misty air,

¹ *Chapters*. Capitals. See *I Kings*, 7: 13-16.

² *Oracle*. See *I Kings*, 6: 19-28.

³ See *Psalms* 45: 8-13; *Exodus*, 28: 33; *I Kings*, 7: 18-19.

OWEN MEREDITH

The stream of folk that came and went,
For worship, and praise, and prayer,
Flowed to and fro, and up and down,
And round the King in his golden crown.

And it came to pass, as the King stood there,
And looked on the house he had built, with pride,
That the Hand of the Lord came unaware,
And touched him; so that he died,
In his purple robe, with his signet-ring,
And the crown wherewith they had crowned him king.

And the stream of the folk that came and went
To worship the Lord with prayer and praise,
Went softly ever, in wonderment,
For the King stood there always;
And it was solemn and strange to behold
The dead king crowned with a crown of gold.

For he leaned on his ebony staff upright;
And over his shoulders the purple robe;
And his hair and his beard were both snow-white,
And the fear of him filled the globe;
So that none dared touch him, though he was dead,
He looked so royal about the head.

And the moons were changed; and the years rolled on;
And the new king reigned in the old king's stead;
And men were married and buried anon;
But the King stood, stark and dead,
Leaning upright on his ebony staff,
Preserved by the sign of the Pentagraph.

OWEN MEREDITH

And the stream of life, as it went and came,
Ever for worship and praise and prayer,
Was awed by the face, and the fear, and the fame
Of the dead king standing there;
For his hair was so white, and his eyes so cold,
That they left him alone with his crown of gold.

So King Solomon stood up, dead, in the House
Of the Lord, held there by the Pentagraph,
Until out from the pillar there ran a red mouse,
And gnawed through his ebony staff;
Then flat on his face the King fell down,
And they picked from the dust a golden crown.

LEWIS CARROLL

ENGLAND, 1832—1898

CHARLES LUTWIDGE DODGSON, the real name of this author-mathematician, made his pseudonym famous through his whimsical *Adventures of Alice in Wonderland* and its sequel, *Through the Looking-Glass*, which added a new note to literature. These classics of juvenilia originated in a series of stories which the author "made up" for the entertainment of some little friends, without a thought of publication. Perhaps the best of his narrative verse is the following.

The Walrus and the Carpenter

THE sun was shining on the sea,
 Shining with all his might:
 He did his very best to make
 The billows smooth and bright—
 And this was odd, because it was
 The middle of the night.

The moon was shining sulkily,
 Because she thought the sun
 Had got no business to be there
 After the day was done—
 "It's very rude of him," she said,
 "To come and spoil the fun!"

The sea was wet as wet could be,
 The sands were dry as dry.
 You could not see a cloud, because
 No cloud was in the sky:
 No birds were flying overhead—
 There were no birds to fly.

The Walrus and the Carpenter
 Were walking close at hand:
 They wept like anything to see
 Such quantities of sand.
 "If this were only cleared away,"
 They said, "it *would* be grand!"

"If seven maids with seven mops
 Swept it for half a year,
 Do you suppose," the Walrus said,
 "That they could get it clear?"

LEWIS CARROLL

"I doubt it," said the Carpenter,
And shed a bitter tear.

"O Oysters, come and walk with us!"

The Walrus did beseech.

"A pleasant talk, a pleasant walk,
Along the briny beach:

We cannot do with more than four,
To give a hand to each."

The eldest Oyster looked at him,

But never a word he said:

The eldest Oyster winked his eye,
And shook his heavy head—

Meaning to say he did not choose
To leave the oyster-bed.

But four young Oysters hurried up,

All eager for the treat:

Their coats were brushed, their faces washed,

Their shoes were clean and neat—

And this was odd, because, you know,
They hadn't any feet.

Four other Oysters followed them,

And yet another four;

And thick and fast they came at last,

And more, and more, and more—

All hopping through the frothy waves,
And scrambling to the shore.

The Walrus and the Carpenter

Walked on a mile or so,

And then they rested on a rock

Conveniently low:

LEWIS CARROLL

And all the little Oysters stood
And waited in a row.

"The time has come," the Walrus said,
"To talk of many things:
Of shoes and ships and sealing-wax,
Of cabbages and kings;
And why the sea is boiling hot—
And whether pigs have wings."

"But wait a bit," the Oysters cried,
"Before we have our chat;
For some of us are out of breath,
And all of us are fat!"
"No hurry!" said the Carpenter.
They thanked him much for that.

"A loaf of bread," the Walrus said,
"Is what we chiefly need:
Pepper and vinegar besides
Are very good indeed—
Now, if you're ready, Oysters dear,
We can begin to feed."

"But not on us!" the Oysters cried,
Turning a little blue.
"After such kindness, that would be
A dismal thing to do!"
"The night is fine," the Walrus said.
"Do you admire the view?"

"It was so kind of you to come!
And you are very nice!"
The Carpenter said nothing but
"Cut us another slice.

LEWIS CARROLL

I wish you were not quite so deaf—
I've had to ask you twice!"

"It seems a shame," the Walrus said,
"To play them such a trick,
After we've brought them out so far,
And made them trot so quick!"
The Carpenter said nothing but
"The butter's spread too thick!"

"I weep for you," the Walrus said:
"I deeply sympathize."
With sobs and tears he sorted out
Those of the largest size,
Holding his pocket-handkerchief
Before his streaming eyes.

"O Oysters," said the Carpenter,
"You've had a pleasant run!
Shall we be trotting home again?"
But answer came there none—
And this was scarcely odd, because
They'd eaten every one.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

ENGLAND, 1832—1904

EDWIN ARNOLD devoted the best part of his life to the interpretation in English verse of the life and philosophy of the East. His chief work with that object is *The Light of Asia* (1879), which might be called the gospel of Buddha in verse according to Edwin Arnold. Parts of it are highly poetic, such as the lyric from the third book, and some of the sermon of Buddha before the king in book eight, though this is sorely weighted with oriental philosophy.

After Death in Arabia

HE who died at Azan sends
This to comfort all his friends:

Faithful friends! It lies, I know,
Pale and white and cold as snow:
And ye say, "Abdallah's dead!"
Weeping at the feet and head.
I can see your falling tears,
I can hear your sighs and prayers;
Yet I smile and whisper this:
"I am not the thing you kiss;
Cease your tears, and let it lie;
It *was* mine—it is not I."

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

Sweet friends! what the women lave
For its last bed of the grave,
Is a tent which I am quitting,
Is a garment no more fitting,
Is a cage from which, at last,
Like a hawk my soul hath passed.
Love the inmate, not the room—
The wearer, not the garb—the plume
Of the falcon, not the bars
That kept him from these splendid stars!

Loving friends! be wise, and dry
Straightway every weeping eye.
What ye lift upon the bier
Is not worth a wistful tear.
'Tis an empty sea-shell—one
Out of which the pearl is gone.
The shell is broken, it lies there;
The pearl, the all, the soul, is here.
'Tis an earthen jar, whose lid
Allah sealed, the while it hid
That treasure of his treasury,
A mind that loved him: let it lie!
Let the shard be earth's once more,
Since the gold shines in his store!

Allah glorious! Allah good!
Now Thy world is understood;
Now the long, long wonder ends!
Yet ye weep, my erring friends,
While the man whom ye call dead,
In unspoken bliss, instead,
Lives and loves you; lost, 'tis true,
By such light as shines for you;
But in light ye cannot see

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

Of unfulfilled felicity—
In enlarging paradise,
Lives a life that never dies.

Farewell friends! yet not farewell;
Where I am, ye, too, shall dwell.
I am gone before your face,
A moment's time, a little space.
When ye come where I have stepped,
Ye will wonder why ye wept;
Ye will know, by wise love taught,
That here is all, and there is naught.
Weep awhile, if ye are fain—
Sunshine still must follow rain;
Only not at death—for death,
Now I know, is that first breath
Which our souls draw when we enter
Life, which is of all life center.

Be ye certain all seems love,
Viewed from Allah's throne above;
Be ye stout of heart, and come
Bravely onward to your home!
La Allah illa Allah! yea!
Thou love divine! Thou Love alway!

He that died at Azan gave
This to those who made his grave.

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

He and She

SHE is dead!" they said to him. "Come away!
Kiss her! and leave her! thy Love is clay!"

They smoothed her tresses of dark brown hair;
On her forehead of marble they laid it fair:

Over her eyes, which gazed too much,
They drew the lids with a gentle touch;

With a tender touch they closed up well
The sweet thin lips that had secrets to tell;

About her brows, and her dear, pale face,
They tied her veil and her marriage-lace;

And drew on her white feet her white silk shoes;
Which were the whiter no eye could choose!

And over her bosom they crossed her hands;
"Come away," they said; "God understands!"

And then there was Silence; and nothing there
But the Silence—and scents of eglantere,

And jasmine, and roses, and rosemary;
For they said, "As a lady should lie, lies she!"

And they held their breath as they left the room,
With a shudder to glance at its stillness and gloom.

But he—who loved her too well to dread
The sweet, the stately, the beautiful dead—

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

He lit his lamp, and took the key,
And turned it! Alone again—he and she!

He and she; but she would not speak,
Though he kissed, in the old place, the quiet cheek.

He and she; yet she would not smile,
Though he called her the name that was fondest ere-
while.

He and she; and she did not move
To any one passionate whisper of love!

Then he said, "Cold lips! and breast without breath,
Is there no voice—no language of death

"Dumb to the ear and still to the sense,
But to heart and to soul distinct—intense?

"See, now—I listen with soul, not ear—
What was the secret of dying, Dear?

"Was it the infinite wonder of all,
How the spirit could let life's flower fall?

"Or was it a greater marvel to feel
The perfect calm o'er the agony steal?

"Was the miracle greatest to find how deep,
Beyond all dreams, sank downward that sleep?

"Did life roll backward its record, Dear,
And show, as they say it does, past things clear?

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

"And was it the innermost heart of the bliss
To find out so what a wisdom love is?

"Oh, perfect Dead! oh, Dead most dear,
I hold the breath of my soul to hear;

"I listen—as deep as to horrible hell,
As high as glad heaven!—and you do not tell!

"There must be pleasures in dying, Sweet,
To make you so placid from head to feet!

"I would tell *you*, Darling, if I were dead,
And 'twere your hot tears upon *my* brow shed.

"I would say, though the Angel of death had laid
His sword on my lips to keep it unsaid.

"*You* should not ask, vainly, with streaming eyes,
Which in Death's touch was the chiefest surprise;

"The very strangest and suddenest thing
Of all surprises that dying must bring."

* * * * *

Ah! foolish world! Oh! most kind Dead!
Though he told me, who will believe it was said?

Who will believe that he heard her say,
With the soft rich voice, in the dear old way:

"The utmost wonder is this—I hear,
And see you, and love you, and kiss you, Dear;

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD

"I can speak, now you listen with soul alone;
If your soul could see, it would all be shown

"What a strange delicious amazement is Death,
To be without body and breathe without breath.

"I should laugh for joy if you did not cry;
Oh, listen! Love lasts!—Love never will die!

"I am only your Angel who was your Bride;
And I know, that though dead, I have never died."

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

ENGLAND, 1832—1914

WATTS-DUNTON will be long remembered as the friend and adviser of Swinburne, and as the author of the famous novel *Aylwyn*, as well as of the illuminating essay on poetry in *The Encyclopædia Britannica*.

From "The Coming of Love"

BENEATH the loveliest dream there coils a fear:
Last night came she whose eyes are memories now;
Her far-off gaze seemed all forgetful how
Love dimmed them once, so calm they shone and clear.
"Sorrow," I said, "has made me old, my dear;
'Tis I, indeed, but grief can change the brow:
Beneath my load a seraph's neck might bow,
Vigils like mine would blanch an angel's hair."

Oh, then I saw, I saw the sweet lips move!
I saw the love-mists thickening in her eyes—
I heard a sound as if a murmuring dove
Felt lonely in the dells of Paradise;
But when upon my neck she fell, my Love,
Her hair smelt sweet of whin and woodland spice.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

Wassail Chorus at the Mermaid Tavern

CHRISTMAS knows a merry, merry place,
Where he goes with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair:
Tell the Mermaid where is that one place,
Where?

Raleigh.

'Tis by Devon's glorious halls,
Whence, dear Ben, I come again:
Bright of golden roofs and walls—
El Dorado's rare domain—
Seem those halls when sunlight launches
Shafts of gold through leafless branches,
Where the winter's feathery mantle blanches
Field and farm and lane.

CHORUS. Christmas knows a merry, merry place, &c.

Drayton.

'Tis where Avon's wood-sprites weave
Through the boughs a lace of rime,
While the bells of Christmas Eve
Fling for Will the Stratford-chime
Over the river-flags embossed,
Rich with flowery runes of frost—
Over the meads where snowy tufts are tossed—
Strains of olden time.

CHORUS. Christmas knows a merry, merry place, &c.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

Shakespeare's Friend.

'Tis, methinks, on any ground
Where our Shakespeare's feet are set.
There smiles Christmas, holly-crowned
With his blithest coronet:
Friendship's face he loveth well:
'Tis a countenance whose spell
Sheds a balm o'er every mead and dell
Where we used to fret.

CHORUS. Christmas knows a merry, merry place, &c.

Heywood.

More than all the pictures, Ben,
Winter weaves by wood or stream,
Christmas loves our London, when
Rise thy clouds of wassail-steam—
Clouds like these, that, curling, take
Forms of faces gone, and wake
Many a lay from lips we loved, and make
London like a dream.

CHORUS. Christmas knows a merry, merry place, &c.

Ben Jonson.

Love's old songs shall never die,
Yet the new shall suffer proof:
Love's old drink of Yule brew I
Wassail for new love's behoof.
Drink the drink I brew, and sing
Till the berried branches swing,
Till our song make all the Mermaid ring—
Yea, from rush to roof.

THEODORE WATTS-DUNTON

FINALE.

Christmas loves this merry, merry place;
Christmas saith with fondest face,
Brightest eye, brightest hair:
"Ben, the drink tastes rare of sack and mace:
Rare!"

JAMES THOMSON

SCOTLAND, 1834—1882

THOMSON wrote little poetry and died comparatively early, yet he was one of the most remarkable poets of the nineteenth century. While many of his poet contemporaries were flirting with pessimism, it was reserved for Thomson to write the great poem of despair. As Philip Bourke Marston observes: "It was for Thomson to say the ultimate word about melancholia; for, of course, it is the result of that disorder which is depicted in *The City of Dreadful Night*. It was for him to gauge its horrible shapes, to understand its revelations of darkness, as Shelley and others have understood revelations of light."

You will doubtless ask whether it is worth while to plunge us into the consciousness of the vast tragedy in which we move. Is the poem not utterly needless? Thompson has some one answer this question out of the dreadful darkness:

"Yes, here and there some weary wanderer
In that same city of tremendous night,
Will understand the speech, and feel a stir
Of fellowship in all-disastrous fight;
I suffer mute and lonely, yet another
Uplifts his voice to let me know a brother
Travels the same wild paths though out of sight."

JAMES THOMSON

I feel that perhaps the machinery is too elaborate and the indictment too dismal in this poem of pessimism: it lacks some final touch of the higher artistry. Do we not sense a higher power in Matthew Arnold's *Dover Beach*? You read his few simple yet suggestive lines and you perhaps feel forever the obscurity of our knowledge, the pathos of our struggle.

From "The City of Dreadful Night"

THE City is of Night; perchance of Death,
But certainly of Night; for never there
Can come the lucid morning's fragrant breath
After the dewy dawning's cold grey air;
The moon and stars may shine with scorn or pity;
The sun has never visited that city,
For it dissolveth in the daylight fair.

Dissolveth like a dream of night away;
Though present in distempered gloom of thought
And deadly weariness of heart all day.

But when a dream night after night is brought
Throughout a week, and such weeks, few or many,
Recur each year for several years, can any
Discern that dream from real life in aught?

For life is but a dream whose shapes return,
Some frequently, some seldom, some by night
And some by day, some night and day: we learn,
The while all change and many vanish quite,
In their recurrence with recurrent changes
A certain seeming order; where this ranges
We count things real; such is memory's night.

JAMES THOMSON

A river girds the city west and south,
The main north channel of a broad lagoon,
Regurging with the salt tides from the mouth:
Waste marshes shine and glister to the moon
For leagues, then moorland black, then stony ridges;
Great piers and causeways, many noble bridges,
Connect the town and islet suburbs strewn.

Upon an easy slope it lies at large,
And scarcely overlaps the long curved crest
Which swells out two leagues from the river marge.
A trackless wilderness rolls north and west,
Savannahs, savage woods, enormous mountains,
Bleak uplands, black ravines with torrent fountains;
And eastward tolls the shipless sea's unrest.

The city is not ruinous, although
Great ruins of an unremembered past,
With others of a few short years ago
More sad, are found within its precincts vast.
The street-lamps always burn; but scarce a casement
In house or palace front from roof to basement
Doth glow or gleam athwart the mirk air cast.

The street-lamps burn amidst the baleful glooms,
Amidst the soundless solitudes immense
Of ranged mansions dark and still as tombs.
The silence which benumbs or strains the sense
Fulfil with awe the soul's despair unweeping:
Myriads of habitants are ever sleeping,
Or dead, or fled from nameless pestilence!

Yet as in some necropolis you find
Perchance one mourner to a thousand dead,
So there; worn faces that look deaf and blind

JAMES THOMSON

Like tragic masks of stone. With weary tread,
Each wrapt in his own doom, they wander, wander,
Or sit foredone and desolately ponder
Through sleepless hours with heavy drooping head.

Mature men chiefly, few in age or youth,
A woman rarely, now and then a child:
A child! If here the heart turns sick with ruth
To see a little one from birth defiled,
Or lame or blind, as preordained to languish
Through youthless life, think how it bleeds with anguish
To meet one erring in that homeless wild.

They often murmur to themselves, they speak
To one another seldom, for their woe
Broods maddening inwardly and scorns to wreak
Itself abroad; and if at whiles it grow
To frenzy which must rave, none heeds the clamor,
Unless there waits some victim of like glamor,
To rave in turn, who lends attentive show.

The City is of Night, but not of Sleep;
There sweet sleep is not for the weary brain;
The pitiless hours like years and ages creep,
A night seems termless hell. This dreadful strain
Of thought and consciousness which never ceases,
Or which some moments' stupor but increases
This, worse than woe, makes wretches there insane.

They leave all hope behind who enter there:
One certitude while sane they cannot leave,
One anodyne for torture and despair;
The certitude of Death, which no reprieve
Can put off long; and which, divinely tender,

JAMES THOMSON

But waits the outstretched hand to promptly render
That draught whose slumber nothing can bereave.

* * * * *

How the moon triumphs through the endless nights!
How the stars throb and glitter as they wheel!
Their thick processions of supernal lights
Around the blue vault obdurate as steel
And men regard with passionate awe and yearning
The mighty marching and the golden burning,
And think the heavens respond to what they feel.

Boats gliding like dark shadows of a dream,
Are glorified from vision as they pass
The quivering moonbridge on the deep black stream:
Cold windows kindle their dead glooms of glass
To restless crystals; cornice, dome and column
Emerge from chaos in the splendor solemn;
Like faery lakes gleam lawns of dewy grass.

With such a living light these dead eyes shine,
These eyes of sightless heaven, that as we gaze
We read a pity, tremulous, divine,
Or cold majestic scorn in their pure rays:
Fond man! they are not haughty, are not tender:
There is no heart or mind in all their splendor,
They thread, mere puppets, all their marvelous maze.

If we could near them with the flight unflown,
We should but find them worlds as sad as this,
Or suns all self-consuming like our own
Enrined by planet worlds as much amiss:
They wax and wane through fusion and confusion;

JAMES THOMSON

The spheres eternal are a grand illusion,
The empyrean is a void abyss.

* * * * *

Anear the centre of that northern crest
Stands out a level upland bleak and bare,
From which the city east and south and west
Sinks gently in long waves; and thronèd there
An Image sits, stupendous, superhuman,
The bronze colossus of a wingèd Woman,
Upon a graded granite base foursquare.

Low-seated she leans forward massively,
With cheek on clenched left hand, the forearm's might
Erect, its elbow on her rounded knee:
Across a clasped book in her lap the right
Upholds a pair of compasses; she gazes
With full set eyes, but wandering in thick mazes
Of sombre thought beholds no outward sight.

Words cannot picture her; but all men know
That solemn sketch the pure sad artist wrought
Three centuries and threescore years ago,
With phantasies of his peculiar thought:
The instruments of carpentry and science
Scattered about her feet, in strange alliance
With the keen wolf-hound sleeping undistraught;

Scales, hour-glass, bell, and magic-square above
The grave and solid infant perched beside,
With open winglets that might bear a dove,
Intent upon its tablets, heavy-eyed;
Her folded wings as of a mighty eagle,
But all too impotent to lift the regal
Robustness of her earth-born strength and pride;

JAMES THOMSON

And with those wings, and that light wreath which
seems

To mock her grand head and the knotted frown
Of forehead charged with baleful thoughts and dreams,

The household bunch of keys, the housewife's gown
Voluminous, indented, and yet rigid

As if a shell of burnished metal frigid,

The feet thick shod to tread all weakness down;

The comet hanging o'er the waste dark seas,

The massy rainbow curved in front of it
Beyond the village with the masts and trees;

The snaky imp, dog-headed, from the Pit,
Bearing upon its batlike leathern pinions

Her name unfolded in the sun's dominions,

The "MELENCOLIA" that transcends all wit.

Thus has the artist copied her, and thus

Surrounded to expound her from sublime,
Her fate heroic and calamitous;

Fronting the dreadful mysteries of Time,
Unvanquished in defeat and desolation,
Undaunted in the hopeless conflagration

Of the day setting on her baffled prime.

Baffled and beaten back she works on still,

Weary and sick of soul she works the more,
Sustained by her indomitable will:

The hands shall fashion and the brain shall pore,
And all her sorrow shall be turned to labor,
Till Death the friend foe piercing with his sabre
That mighty heart of hearts ends bitter war.

But as if blacker night could dawn on night,

With tenfold gloom on moonless night unstarred,

JAMES THOMSON

A sense more tragic than defeat and blight,
More desperate than strife with hope debarred,
More fatal than the adamantine Never
Encompassing her passionate endeavor,
Dawns glooming in her tenebrous regard.

The sense that every struggle brings defeat
Because Fate holds no prize to crown success;
That all the oracles are dumb or cheat
Because they have no secret to express;
That none can pierce the vast black veil uncertain
Because there is no light beyond the curtain;
That all is vanity and nothingness.

Titanic from her high throne in the north,
That City's sombre Patroness and Queen,
In bronze sublimity she gazes forth
Over her Capital of teen and threne,
Over the river and with its isles and bridges,
The marsh and moorland, to the stern rock ridges,
Confronting them with a coëval mien.

The moving moon and stars from east to west
Circle before her in the sea of air;
Shadows and gleams glide round her solemn rest.
Her subjects often gaze up to her there:
The strong to drink new strength of iron endurance,
The weak new terrors; all, renewed assurance
And confirmation of the old despair.

RODEN NOEL

ENGLAND, 1834—1894

THE strength of this Victorian poet consists in the combination of full sensuous feeling for the material world with an ever-present sense of the spirit informing it and bringing all its products into vital harmony. This enabled Noel to paint such pictures of voluptuous beauty and concrete form as *The Water-Nymph and the Boy* or *The Triumph of Bacchus*; and at the same time to channel the mysteries of life and the universe as in his *Beethoven*.

Song of The Water-Nymph

FROM "THE WATER-NYMPH AND THE BOY"

I FLUNG me round him,
I drew him under;
I clung, I drowned him,
My own white wonder! . . .

Father and mother,
Weeping and wild,
Came to the forest,
Calling the child,
Came from the palace,
Down to the pool,
Calling my darling,
My beautiful!
Under the water,
Cold and so pale!
Could it be love made
Beauty to fail?

RODEN NOEL

Ah! me for mortals:
In a few moons,
If I had left him,
After some Junes
He would have faded,
Faded away,
He, the young monarch, whom
All would obey,
Fairer than day;
Alien to springtime,
Joyless and grey,
He would have faded,
Faded away,
Moving a mockery,
Scorned of the day!
Now I have taken him
All in his prime,
Saved from slow poisoning
Pitiless Time,
Filled with his happiness,
One with the prime,
Saved from the cruel
Dishonor of Time.
Laid him, my beautiful,
Laid him to rest,
Loving, adorable,
Softly to rest,
Here in my crystalline,
Here in my breast!

Beethoven

THE mage of music, deaf to outward sound,
 Rehearsing mighty harmonies within,
 Waved his light wand; the full aerial tides
 Ebbd billowing to rear of him, o'erwhelmed
 All listening auditors, engulphed, and swept
 Upon the indomitable, imperial surge
 To alien realms, and halls of ancient awe,
 Which are the presence-chambers of dim Death:
 The grand departed haunt this mountain-sound!
 Cliffs and ravines, and torrent-shadowing pines,
 A pomp of winds and waters and wild cloud
 The enchanter raises: then the solemn scene
 Evanishing, lo! delicate soft calm
 Of vernal airs, young leaflets and blithe birds,
 The cuckoo and the nightingale, with bloom
 Of myriad flowers and rills and water-falls,
 Or sunlit rains that twinkle through the leaves;
 And odorous ruffled whirlpools of the rose.
 Anon, some wondrous petal of a flower,
 An ample velvet petal, slides along
 A luminous air of summer, visibly
 Mantling a vermeil glory in the blue;
 And now thin ice films clearest water; now
 Our youngest angel whispers out of heaven,
 And all the choir of his companions
 Let loose their rapture on swift sudden wings,
 Sunshine released unhopd-for from a cloud!
 Slant rays of opal through the clerestory;
 Dawn over solemn heights of lonely snow,
 Aerial dawn, that deepens into day;
 A congregating of white seraph throngs,
 Who hold the realms of ether with white plume,

RODEN NOEL

And with a sweet compulsion lift to heaven!
Ye, Harmonies, expand immeasurably
The temple of our soul, and yet are more,
Than earth can bear; within the courts above
Ye may expatiate majestic,
Native, at home! poor mortals hide their tears,
With caught breath, nor may follow: mountain stairs,
Platform on platform, ye aspire to God!
His infinite Soul who bore you is immortal,
And ours, in whom reverberates your appeal!
O music-marvel! how your royal river
Mirrors our life; there breathes exhaled from it
Sorrow and joy, and triumph and despair;
Your eagle flight is through the infinite,
No barriers to prison from the immense.
Yours the large language of the heights of Heaven!
Now lonely prow, exploring realms unknown,
Unpiloted, beneath wan alien stars,
Your strain recalleth, keels of lonely thought,
Wandering in some sublime bewilderment,
To pioneer where all the world will go,
Now merry buoyancy, as of a boat,
That dips in billowy foam at morning tide.
Ye are alive with yearnings of young love,
Or sombre with immeasurable woe,
Sombre with all the terror of the world,
Wild with the awe and horror of the world,
Begloomed like seas empurpled under cloud,
Reeling and dark with horror of the wind,
Or pale, long heaving under a veiled moon.

Then, with the fading symphony, the master
Drooped, earthward fallen through mortal weariness,
From heights empyreal; he faced the slaves
Now silent, with stilled instruments, who wrought

RODEN NOEL

A fabric for his high imagination,
A chambered palace-pile of echoing sound,
A shadowy fane within the realms of sense.
Drear Silence seems to him to reign: when lo!
A touch, at which he turns! the audience,
Vast, thronged, innumerable have risen before him!
Unhearing the loud storm of their applause,
He sees the tumult of their ocean joy
Thunderously jubilant, in eloquent eyes,
And flashing gems, waved kerchiefs, and moved feet!
So then the solitary master feels
The heart-clasp of our infinite human world,
And bows rejoicing not to be alone.

Ah! brothers, let us work our work, for love
Of what the God in us prevails to do!
And if, when all is done, the unanswering void
And silence weigh upon our souls, remember
The music of a lonely heart may help
How many lonely hearts unknown to him!
The seeming void and silence are aware
With audience august, invisible,
Who yield thank-offering, encouragement,
And strong co-operation; the dim deep
Is awful with the God in Whom we move,
Who molds to consummation where we fail,
And saith, "Well done!" to every faithful deed,
Who in Himself will full accomplish all.

WILLIAM MORRIS

ENGLAND, 1834—1896

THIS great-hearted poet was one of the five or six most distinguished poets of the Victorian age. He was high-placed and prosperous, and yet he held radical hopes of a new order for the people. At the end of the nineteenth century, he led the Labor Movement in England when the movement was called Socialism. He wrote many songs to show the sad contrast between the poverties at the bottom and the riches at the top. He worked to bring back joy to an age that had forgotten joy in a mad scramble for money; and he wished to give to all work-weary men the courage of a new social hope.

Escaping from the sordid and the squalid in the world about him, Morris the poet took refuge in the lands of imagination, rediscovered or undiscovered, in melodious, unhurried narrative poems from medieval and classic legends. *The Earthly Paradise* is a treasury of tales invested with rare romantic glamor.

A Garden by the Sea

FROM "THE LIFE AND DEATH OF JASON"

This is a song sung by the water-nymph who entices Hylas to the borders of the little Mysian river, and lulls him to sleep while her companions bear him down to their hidden home; so he is lost forever to the light of day, and (with Hercules, who wanders far and near in search of Hylas) is left behind by the Argonauts, who are forced to follow their quest for the Golden Fleece.

I KNOW a little garden-close
Set thick with lily and red rose,
Where I would wander if I might
From dewy dawn to dewy night,
And have one with me wandering.

WILLIAM MORRIS

And though within it no birds sing,
And though no pillared house is there,
And though the apple boughs are bare
Of fruit and blossom, would to God,
Her feet upon the green grass trod,
And I beheld them as before.

There comes a murmur from the shore,
And in the place two fair streams are,
Drawn from the purple hills afar,
Drawn down unto the restless sea;
Dark hills whose heath-bloom feeds no bee,
Dark shore no ship has ever seen,
Tormented by the billows green,
Whose murmur comes unceasingly
Unto the place for which I cry.

For which I cry both day and night,
For which I let slip all delight,
That maketh me both deaf and blind,
Careless to win, unskilled to find,
And quick to lose what all men seek.

Yet tottering as I am, and weak,
Still have I left a little breath
To seek within the jaws of death
An entrance to that happy place,
To seek the unforgotten face
Once seen, once kissed, once reft from me
Anigh the murmuring of the sea.

WILLIAM MORRIS

Love is Enough

LOVE is enough: though the world be a-waning,
And the woods have no voice but the voice of
complaining,

Though the sky be too dark for dim eyes to discover
The gold-cups and daisies fair blooming thereunder,
Though the hills be held shadows, and the sea a dark
wonder,

And this day draw a veil over all deeds passed over,
Yet their hands shall not tremble, their feet shall not
falter;

The wind shall not weary, the fear shall not alter

These lips and these eyes of the loved and the lover.

The Idle Singer

FROM "THE EARTHLY PARADISE"

OF Heaven or Hell I have no power to sing.
I cannot ease the burden of your fears,
Nor make quick-coming death a little thing,
Nor bring again the pleasure of past years;
Nor for my words shall ye forget your tears,
Nor hope again for aught that I can say,
The idle singer of an empty day.

But rather, when aweary of your mirth,
From full hearts still unsatisfied ye sigh,
And, feeling kindly unto all the earth,
Grudge every minute as it passes by,
Made the more mindful that the sweet days die—

WILLIAM MORRIS

Remember me a little then, I pray,
The idle singer of an empty day.

The heavy trouble, the bewildering care
That weighs us down who live and earn our bread,
These idle verses have no power to bear;
So let me sing of names remembered,
Because they, living not, can ne'er be dead,
Nor long time take their memory quite away
From us poor singers of an empty day.

Atalanta's Race

FROM "THE EARTHLY PARADISE"

Atalanta, daughter of King Schœneus, not willing to lose her virgin's estate, made it a law to all suitors that each one should run a race with her in the public place, and if he failed to overcome her should die unrevenged; and thus many brave men perished. At last came Milanion, the son of Amphidamas, who, outrunning her with the help of Venus, gained the virgin and wedded her.

This poem is a legendary story that has held the romantic attention of the ages. My extract opens at the Temple of Venus, where Milanion, before the race, is beseeching the goddess for help in the contest. Here she bestows on him the three alluring golden apples, which enable him to win the race and—the lady.

UPON the shore of Argolis there stands
A temple to the goddess that he sought,
That, turned unto the lion-bearing lands,
Fenced from the east, of cold winds hath no thought,
Though to no homestead there the sheaves are brought,
No groaning press torments the close-clipped murk,
Lonely the fane stands, far from all men's work. . .

WILLIAM MORRIS

"O fairest, hear me now who do thy will,
Plead for thy rebel that she be not slain,
But live and love and be thy servant still;
Ah, give her joy and take away my pain,
And thus two long-enduring servants gain.
An easy thing this is to do for me,
What need of my vain words to weary thee!"

But through the stillness he her voice could hear
Piercing his heart with joy scarce bearable,
That said, "Milanion, wherefore dost thou fear,
I am not hard to those who love me well;
List to what I a second time will tell,
And thou mayest hear perchance, and live to save
The cruel maiden from a loveless grave.

"See, by my feet three golden apples lie—
Such fruit among the heavy roses falls,
Such fruit my watchful damsels carefully
Store up within the best loved of my walls,
Ancient Damascus, where the lover calls
Above my unseen head, and faint and light
The rose-leaves flutter round me in the night.

"And note that these are not alone most fair
With heavenly gold, but longing strange they bring
Unto the hearts of men, who will not care
Beholding these, for any once-loved thing
Till round the shining sides their fingers cling.
And thou shalt see thy well-girt swift-foot maid
By sight of these amidst her glory stayed.

"For bearing these within a scrip with thee,
When first she heads thee from the starting-place
Cast down the first one for her eyes to see,

WILLIAM MORRIS

And when she turns aside make on apace,
And if again she heads thee in the race,
Spare not the other two to cast aside
If she not long enough behind will bide."

Milanion raised his head at this last word,
For now so soft and kind she seemed to be
No longer of her Godhead was he feared;
Too late he looked, for nothing could he see
But the white image glimmering doubtfully
In the departing twilight cold and gray,
And those three apples on the steps that lay. . .

Now has the lingering month at last gone by,
Again are all folk round the running place,
Nor other seems the dismal pageantry
Than heretofore, but that another face
Looks o'er the smooth course ready for the race,
For now, beheld of all, Milanion
Stands on the spot he twice has looked upon.

But he—what look of mastery was this
He cast on her? Why were his lips so red?
Why was his face so flushed with happiness?
So looks not one who deems himself but dead,
Even if to death he bows a willing head;
So rather looks a god well pleased to find
Some earthly damsel fashioned to his mind.

Now while she seemed to hear her beating heart,
Above their heads the trumpet blast rang out
And forth they sprang; and she must play her part,
Then flew her white feet, knowing not a doubt,
Though slackening once, she turned her head about,

WILLIAM MORRIS

But then she cried aloud and faster fled
Than e'er before, and all men deemed him dead.

But with no sound he raised aloft his hand,
And thence what seemed a ray of light there flew
And past the maid rolled on along the sand;
Then trembling she her feet together drew,
And in her heart a strong desire there grew
To have the toy; some god she thought had given
That gift to her, to make of earth a heaven.

Then from the course with eager steps she ran,
And in her odorous bosom laid the gold.
But when she turned again, the great-limbed man,
Now well ahead she failed not to behold,
And mindful of her glory waxing cold,
Sprang up and followed him in hot pursuit,
Though with one hand she touched the golden fruit.

Note too, the bow that she was wont to bear
She laid aside to grasp the glittering prize,
And o'er her shoulder from the quiver fair
Three arrows fell and lay before her eyes
Unnoticed, as amidst the people's cries
She sprang to head the strong Milanion,
Who now the turning-post had well nigh won.

But as he set his mighty hand on it
White fingers underneath his own were laid,
And white limbs from his dazzled eyes did flit,
Then he the second fruit cast by the maid:
But she ran on awhile, then as afraid
Wavered and stopped, and turned and made no stay,
Until the globe with its bright fellow lay.

WILLIAM MORRIS

Then, as a troubled glance she cast around
Now far ahead the Argive could she see,
And in her garment's hem one hand she wound
To keep the double prize, and strenuously
Sped o'er the course, and little doubt had she
To win the day, though now but scanty space
Was left betwixt him and the winning place.

Short was the way unto such wingèd feet,
Quickly she gained upon him till at last
He turned about her eager eyes to meet
And from his hand the third fair apple cast.
She wavered not, but turned and ran so fast
After the prize that should her bliss fulfil,
That in her hand it lay ere it was still.

Nor did she rest, but turned about to win
Once more, an unblest woeful victory—
And yet—and yet—why does her breath begin
To fail her—and her feet drag heavily?
Why fails she now to see if far or nigh
The goal is? why do her gray eyes grow dim?
Why do these tremors run through every limb?

She spreads her arms abroad some stay to find
Else must she fall, indeed, and findeth this,
A strong man's arms about her body twined.
Nor may she shudder now to feel his kiss,
So wrapped she is in new unbroken bliss:
Made happy that the foe the prize hath won,
She weeps glad tears for all her glory done.

Shatter the trumpet, hew adown the posts!
Upon the brazen altar break the sword,
And scatter incense to appease the ghosts

WILLIAM MORRIS

Of those who died here by their own award.
Bring forth the image of the mighty Lord,
And her who unseen o'er the runners hung,
And did a deed for ever to be sung.

Here are the gathered folk; make no delay:
Open King Schœneus' well-filled treasury,
Bring out the gifts long hid from light of day,
The golden bowls o'erwrought with imagery,
Gold chains, and unguents brought from over sea,
The saffron gown the old Phœnician brought,
Within the temple of the Goddess wrought.

O ye, O damsels, who shall never see
Her, that Love's servant bringeth now to you,
Returning from another victory,
In some cool bower do all that now is due!
Since she in token of her service new
Shall give to Venus offerings rich enow,
Her maiden zone, her arrows, and her bow.

Ladies' Gard

FROM "GOLDEN WINGS"

MIDWAYS of a walled garden,
In the happy poplar land,
Did an ancient castle stand,
With an old knight for a warden.

Many scarlet bricks there were
In its walls, and old grey stone;
Over which red apples shone
At the right time of the year.

WILLIAM MORRIS

On the bricks the green moss grew,
Yellow lichen on the stone,
Over which red apples shone;
Little war that castle knew.

Deep green water filled the moat,
Each side had a red-brick lip,
Green and mossy with the drip
Of dew and rain; there was a boat

Of carven wood, with hangings green
About the stern; it was great bliss
For lovers to sit there and kiss
In the hot summer noons, not seen.

Across the moat the fresh west wind
In very little ripples went:
The way the heavy aspens bent
Towards it was a thing to mind.

The painted drawbridge over it
Went up and down with gilded chains:
'Twas pleasant in the summer rains
Within the bridge-house there to sit.

There were five swans that ne'er did eat
The water-weeds, for ladies came
Each day, and young knights did the same,
And gave them cakes and bread for meat.

They had a house of painted wood,
A red roof gold-spiked over it,
Wherein upon their eggs to sit
Week after week; no drop of blood,

WILLIAM MORRIS

Drawn from men's bodies by sword-blows,
Came ever there, or any tear:
Most certainly from year to year
'Twas pleasant as a Provence rose.

The Voice of Toil

In this poem and the two following poems by Morris, we feel the fire of the radical reformer—feel the Social Democracy that burned like a religion in all the closing years of his life. He edited "The Commonweal"; and, by the way, the first poem of mine to appear in England was printed in his famous journal (1886) and it was his wish that I should become a regular contributor.

I HEARD men saying, Leave hope and praying,
All days shall be as all have been;
Today and tomorrow bring fear and sorrow,
The never-ending toil between.

When Earth was younger mid toil and hunger,
In hope we strove, and our hands were strong;
Then great men led us, with words they fed us,
And bade us right the earthly wrong.

Go read in story their deeds and glory,
Their names amidst the nameless dead:
Turn then from lying to us slow-dying
In that good world to which they led;

WILLIAM MORRIS

Where fast and faster our iron master,
The thing we made, for ever drives,
Bids us grind treasure and fashion pleasure
For other hopes and other lives.

Where home is a hovel and dull we grovel,
Forgetting that the world is fair:
Where no babe we cherish, lest its very soul perish;
Where mirth is crime, and love a snare.

Who now shall lead us, what god shall heed us
As we lie in the hell our hands have won?
For us are no rulers but fools and befoolers:
The great are fallen, the wise men gone.

I heard men saying, Leave tears and praying,
The sharp knife heedeth not the sheep:
Are we not stronger than the rich and the wronger,
When day breaks over dreams and sleep?

Come, shoulder to shoulder ere the world grows older!
Help lies in nought but thee and me:
Hope is before us, and the long years that bore us
Bore leaders more than men may be.

Let dead hearts tarry and trade and marry,
And trembling nurse their dreams of mirth,
While we the living our lives are giving
To bring the bright new world to birth.

Come, shoulder to shoulder ere earth grows older!
The Cause spreads over land and sea:
Now the world shaketh, and fear awaketh,
And joy at last for thee and me.

WILLIAM MORRIS

The Day is Coming

I

COME hither, lads, and harken, for a tale there is
to tell,
Of the wonderful days a-coming, when all shall be
better than well.

And the tale shall be told of a country, a land in the
midst of the sea,
And folk shall call it England in the days that are
going to be.

There more than one in a thousand in the days that
are yet to come,
Shall have some hope of the morrow, some joy of the
ancient home.

For then, laugh not, but listen to this strange tale of
mine,
All folk that are in England shall be better lodged
than swine.

Then a man shall work and bethink him, and rejoice
in the deeds of his hand,
Nor yet come home in the even too faint and weary
to stand.

Men in that time a-coming shall work and have no fear
For to-morrow's lack of earning and the hunger-wolf
anear.

WILLIAM MORRIS

I tell you this for a wonder, that no man then shall
 be glad
Of his fellow's fall and mishap to snatch all the work
 he had.

For that which the worker winneth shall then be his
 indeed,
Nor shall half be reaped for nothing by him that sowed
 no seed.

O strange new wonderful justice! But for whom shall
 we gather the gain?
For ourselves for each of our fellows, and no hand
 shall labor in vain.

Then all Mine and all Thine shall be Ours, and no
 more shall any man crave
For riches that serve for nothing but to fetter a friend
 for a slave.

And what wealth then shall be left us when none
 shall gather gold
To buy his friend in the market, and pinch and pinch
 the sold?

Nay, what save the lovely city, and the little house on
 the hill,
And the wastes and the woodland beauty, and the happy
 fields we till;

And the homes of ancient stories, the tombs of the
 mighty dead;
And the wise men seeking out marvels, and the poet's
 teeming head;

WILLIAM MORRIS

And the painter's hand of wonder; and the marvelous
fiddle-bow,
And the banded quires of music: all those that do
and know.

For all these shall be ours and all men's; nor shall
any lack a share
Of the toil and the gain of living in the days when
the world grows fair.

II

Ah! such are the days that shall be! But what are
the deeds of to-day,
In the days of the years we dwell in, that wear our
lives away?

Why, then, and for what are we waiting? There are
three words to speak;

WE WILL IT, and what is the foeman but the dream-
strong wakened and weak?

O why and for what are we waiting? while our brothers
droop and die,

And on every wind of the heavens a wasted life goes by.

How long shall they reproach us where crowd on
crowd they dwell,

Poor ghosts of the wicked city, the gold-crushed, hungry
hell?

Through squalid life they labored, in sordid grief they
died,

Those sons of a mighty mother, those props of Eng-
land's pride.

WILLIAM MORRIS

They are gone; there is none can undo it, nor save our
souls from the curse;
But many a million cometh, and shall they be better
or worse?

It is we must answer and hasten, and open wide the
door
For the rich man's hurrying terror, and the slow-foot
hope of the poor.

Yea, the voiceless wrath of the wretched, and their un-
learned discontent,
We must give it voice and wisdom till the waiting-tide
be spent.

Come, then, since all things call us, the living and
the dead,
And over the weltering tangle a glimmering light is
shed.

Come, then, let us cast off fooling, and put by ease
and rest,
For the Cause alone is worthy till the good days bring
the best.

Come, join in the only battle wherein no man can fail,
Where whoso fadeth and dieth, yet his deed shall still
prevail.

Ah! come, cast off all fooling, for this, at least, we
know:
That the Dawn and the Day is coming, and forth the
Banners go.

WILLIAM MORRIS

The March of the Workers

WHAT is this—the sound and rumor? What is
this that all men hear
Like the wind in hollow valleys when the storm is
drawing near,
Like the rolling-on of ocean in the eventide of fear?
'Tis the people marching on.

CHORUS

Hark the rolling of the thunder!
Lo! the sun! and lo! thereunder
Riseth wrath, and hope, and wonder,
And the host comes marching on.

Forth they come from grief and torment; on they go
toward health and mirth.
All the wide world is their dwelling, every corner of
the earth.
Buy them, sell them for thy service! Try the bargain
what 'tis worth,
For the days are marching on. (Chorus)

These are they who build thy houses, weave thy rai-
ment, win thy wheat,
Smooth the rugged, fill the barren, turn the bitter into
sweet.
All for thee this day—and ever. What reward for
them is meet?
Till the host comes marching on. (Chorus)

Many a hundred years passed over have they labored
deaf and blind;

WILLIAM MORRIS

Never tidings reached their sorrow, never hope their
toil might find.

Now at last they've heard and hear it, and the cry
comes down the wind,

And their feet are marching on. (Chorus)

Is it war then? Will ye perish as the dry wood in
the fire?

Is it peace? Then be ye of us, let your hope be our
desire.

Come and live! for life awaketh, and the world shall
never tire;

And hope is marching on. (Chorus)

On we march then, we the workers, and the rumor
that ye hear

Is the blended sound of battle and deliverance drawing
near;

For the hope of every creature is the banner that we
bear.

And the world is marching on. (Chorus)

The Haystack in the Floods

HAD she come all the way for this,
To part at last without a kiss?

Yea, had she borne the dirt and rain

That her own eyes might see him slain

Beside the haystack in the floods?

Along the dripping leafless woods,

The stirrip touching either shoe,

She rode astride as troopers do;

With kirtle kilted to her knee,

WILLIAM MORRIS

To which the mud splashed wretchedly;
And the wet dripped from every tree
Upon her head and heavy hair,
And on her eyelids broad and fair;
The tears and rain ran down her face.

By fits and starts they rode apace,
And very often was his place
Far off from her; he had to ride
Ahead, to see what might betide
When the roads crossed; and sometimes, when
There rose a murmuring from his men,
Had to turn back with promises.
Ah me! she had but little ease;
And often for pure doubt and dread
She sobbed, made giddy in the head
By the swift riding; while, for cold,
Her slender fingers scarce could hold
The wet reins; yea, and scarcely, too,
She felt the foot within her shoe
Against the stirrup: all for this,
To part at last without a kiss
Beside the haystack in the floods.

For when they neared that old soaked hay,
They saw across the only way
That Judas, Godmar, and the three
Red running lions dismally
Grinned from his pennon, under which
In one straight line along the ditch,
They counted thirty heads. So then
While Robert turned round to his men,
She saw at once the wretched end,
And, stooping down, tried hard to rend
Her coif the wrong way from her head,

WILLIAM MORRIS

And hid her eyes; while Robert said:
"Nay, love, 'tis scarcely two to one;
At Poitiers where we made them run
So fast—why, sweet my love, good cheer,
The Gascon frontier is so near,
Nought after us."

But: "O!" she said,
"My God! my God! I have to tread
The long way back without you; then
The court at Paris; those six men;
The gratings of the Chatelet;
The swift Seine on some rainy day
Like this, and people standing by,
And laughing, while my weak hands try
To recollect how strong men swim.
All this, or else a life with him,
For which I should be damned at last,
Would God that this next hour were past!"

He answered not, but cried his cry,
"St. George for Marny!" cheerily;
And laid his hand upon her rein.
Alas! no man of all his train
Gave back that cheery cry again;
And, while for rage his thumb beat fast
Upon his sword-hilt, some one cast
About his neck a kerchief long,
And bound him. Then they went along
To Godmar, who said: "Now, Jehane,
Your lover's life is on the wane
So fast, that, if this very hour
You yield not as my paramour,
He will not see the rain leave off:

WILLIAM MORRIS

Nay, keep your tongue from gibe and scoff,
Sir Robert, or I slay you now."

She laid her hand upon her brow,
Then gazed upon the palm, as though
She thought her forehead bled, and: "No!"
She said, and turned her head away,
As there was nothing else to say,
And everything was settled: red
Grew Godmar's face from chin to head:
"Jehane, on yonder hill there stands
My castle, guarding well my lands;
What hinders me from taking you,
And doing that I list to do
To your fair wilful body, while
Your knight lies dead?"

A wicked smile
Wrinkled her face, her lips grew thin,
A long way out she thrust her chin:
"You know that I should strangle you
While you were sleeping; or bite through
Your throat, by God's help: ah!" she said,
"Lord Jesus, pity your poor maid!
For in such wise they hem me in,
I cannot choose but sin and sin,
Whatever happens: yet I think
They could not make me eat or drink,
And so should I just reach my rest."
"Nay, if you do not my behest,
O Jehane! though I love you well,"
Said Godmar, "would I fail to tell
All that I know?" "Foul lies," she said.
"Eh? lies, my Jehane? by God's head,
At Paris folk would deem them true!

WILLIAM MORRIS

Do you know, Jehane, they cry for you:
'Jehane the brown! Jehane the brown!
Give us Jehane to burn or drown!'—
Eh!—gag me Robert!—sweet my friend,
This were indeed a piteous end
For those long fingers, and long feet,
And long neck, and smooth shoulders sweet;
An end that few men would forget
That saw it. So, an hour yet:
Consider, Jehane, which to take
Of life or death!"

So, scarce awake,
Dismounting, did she leave that place,
And totter some yards: with her face
Turned upward to the sky she lay,
Her head on a wet heap of hay,
And feel asleep: and while she slept,
And did not dream, the minutes crept
Round to twelve again; but she,
Being waked at last, sighed quietly,
And strangely childlike came, and said:
"I will not." Straightway Godmar's head,
As though it hung on strong wires, turned
Most sharply round, and his face burned.

For Robert, both his eyes were dry,
He could not weep, but gloomily
He seemed to watch the rain; yea, too,
His lips were firm; he tried once more
To touch her lips; she reached out, sore
And vain desire so tortured them,
The poor gray lips, and now the hem
Of his sleeve brushed them.

WILLIAM MORRIS

With a start

Up Godmar rose, thrust them apart;
From Robert's throat he loosed the bands
Of silk and mail. With empty hands
Held out, she stood and gazed, and saw,
The long bright blade without a flaw
Glide out from Godmar's sheath, his hand
In Robert's hair; she saw him bend
Back Robert's head; she saw him send
The thin steel down; the blow told well,
Right backward the knight Robert fell,
And moaned as dogs do, being half dead,
Unwitting, as I deem: so then
Godmar turned grinning to his men,
Who ran, some five or six, and beat
His head to pieces at their feet.

Then Godmar turned again and said:
"So, Jehane, the first fitte is read!
Take note, my lady, that your way
Lies backward to the Chatelet!"
She shook her head and gazed awhile
At her cold hands with a rueful smile,
As though this thing had made her mad.

This was the parting that they had
Beside the haystack in the floods.

LORD DE TABLEY

ENGLAND, 1835—1887

DE TABLEY is a poet who has a fine sense of diction, a remarkable vocabulary, and a poetic temper nobly sensitive to all thrilling and poignant beauty. A study of his work reveals an exasperating genius, whose poetry is starred by brilliant passages but marred by hasty writing. In the *Study of a Spider* he achieves a masterpiece of whimsicality.

The Study of a Spider

FROM holy flower to holy flower
Thou weavest thine unhallowed bower:
The harmless dewdrops, beaded thin,
Ripple along thy ropes of sin.
Thy house a grave, a gulf thy throne
Affright the fairies every one.
Thy winding-sheets are grey and fell,
Imprisoning with nets of hell
The lovely births that winnow by,
Winged sisters of the rainbow sky—
Elf-darlings, fluffy, bee-bright things,
And owl-white moths with mealy wings,
And tiny flies, as gauzy thin
As ever were shut electrum in.
These are thy death spoils, insect ghoul,
With their dear life thy fangs are foul.
Thou felon anchorite of pain
Who sittest in a world of slain;

LORD DE TABLEY

Hermit, who tunest song unsweet
To heaving wind and writhing feet;
A glutton of creation's sighs,
Miser of many miseries;
Toper, whose lonely feasting chair
Sways in inhospitable air.
The board is bare, the bloated host
Drinks to himself toast after toast.
His lip requires no goblet brink,
But like a weasel must he drink.
The vintage is as old as time
And bright as sunset, pressed and prime.
Ah, venom mouth and shaggy thighs
And paunch grown sleek with sacrifice,
Thy dolphin back and shoulders round
Coarse-hairy, as some goblin hound
Whom a hag rides to Sabbath on,
While shuddering stars in fear grow wan.
Thou palace priest of treachery,
Thou type of selfish lechery,
I break the toils around thy head
And from thy gibbets take thy dead.

From "Orestes"

Orestes, the son of the murdered Agamemnon and Clytemnestra, was pursued by the avenging Eumenides. The Chorus cries an indictment of the Olympian Deity.

LET us go up and look him in the face—
We are but as he made us; the disgrace
Of this, our imperfection, is his own—
And unabashed in that fierce glare and blaze

LORD DE TABLEY

Front him and say,
"We come not to atone,
To cringe and moan:
God, vindicate thy way.
Erase the staining sorrow we have known,
Thou, whom ill things obey;
And give our clay
Some master bliss imperial as thine own:
Or wipe us quite away,
Far from the ray of thine eternal throne.
Dream not we love this sorrow of our breath,
Hope not we wince or palpitate at death;
Slay us, for thine is nature and thy slave:
Draw down her clouds to be our sacrifice,
And heap unmeasured mountain for our grave,
With peaks of fire and ice,
Flicker one cord of lightning, north to south,
And mix in awful glories wood and cloud;
We shall have rest, and find
Illimitable darkness for our shroud;
We shall have peace, then, surely, when thy mouth
Breathes us away into the darkness blind,
Then only kind."

ALFRED AUSTIN

ENGLAND, 1835—1913

ALFRID AUSTIN, who became poet laureate of England, in 1896, in succession to Tennyson, is not a great poet, and never sought to emulate the fine Tennysonian diction; his lines are seldom jewelled by "curious felicities." But they are always graceful, and sometimes are admirably vigorous and hearty. He has succeeded in lyrical, in narrative and in dramatic poetry. Now and then, as in the following, he writes verses in which the manner of the Elizabethan lyrists is somewhat closely reproduced.

Elegy

THE crab, the bullace and the sloe,
They burgeon in the Spring;
And when the west wind melts the snow,
The redstarts build and sing.
But Death's at work in rind and root,
And loves the green buds best;
And when the pairing music's mute,
He spares the empty nest.
Death! Death!
Death is master of lord and clown;
Close the coffin and hammer it down. . . .

When logs about the house are stacked,
And next year's hose is knit,
And tales are told and jokes are cracked,
And faggots blaze and spit;
Death sits down in the ingle-nook,

ALFRED AUSTIN

Sits down and does not speak:
But he puts his arm round the maid's that's warm,
And she tingles in the cheek.

Death! Death!

Death is master of lord and clown;
Shovel the clay in, tread it down.

Primroses

THIS, too, be your glory great,
Primroses, you do not wait,
As the other flowers do,
For the Spring to smile on you,
But with coming are content,
Asking no encouragement.
Ere the hardy crocus cleaves
Sunny borders 'neath the eaves;
Ere the thrush his song rehearse,
Sweeter than all poets' verse;
Ere the early bleating lambs
Cling like shadows to their dams;
Ere the blackthorn breaks to white,
Snowy-hooded anchorite;
Out from every hedge you look,
You are bright by every brook,
Wearing for your sole defence
Fearlessness of innocence.
While the daffodils still waver,
Ere the jonquil gets its savor;
While the linnets yet but pair,
You are fledged, and everywhere.
Nought can daunt you, nought distress,
Neither cold nor sunlessness.

ALFRED AUSTIN

You, when Lent sleet flies apace,
Look the tempest in the face
As descend the flakes more slow,
From your eyelids shake the snow,
And, when all the clouds have flown,
Meet the sun's smile with your own.
Nothing ever makes you less
Gracious to ungraciousness.
March may bluster up and down,
Pettish April sulk and frown;
Closer to their skirts you cling,
Coaxing Winter to be Spring.

W. S. GILBERT
ENGLAND, 1836—1911

To the Terrestrial Globe

By a Miserable Wretch

ROLL on, thou ball, roll on!
Through pathless realms of Space
Roll on!
What though I'm in a sorry case?
What though I cannot meet my bills?
What though I suffer toothache's ills?
What though I swallow countless pills?
Never *you* mind!
Roll on!

Roll on, thou ball, roll on!
Through seas of inky air
Roll on!
It's true I've got no shirts to wear;
It's true my butcher's bill is due;
It's true my prospects all look blue—
But don't let that unsettle you!
Never *you* mind!
Roll on! (*It rolls on*)

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

ENGLAND, 1837—1909

LEAVING Oxford without a degree, in 1860 Swinburne published *The Queen Mother* and *Rosamond*, followed five years later with his dramatic masterpiece, *Atalanta in Calydon*, in which was first displayed that magical mastery of metrical form for which Swinburne is distinguished. In 1866 he awakened violent criticism with *Poems and Ballads*, by which English Philistinism was outraged. Entering the field of political lyricism, he sang liberty with the same passionate utterance with which he had sung of earthly love. With occasional lapses in power, Swinburne produced, besides his closet-plays, a second series of *Poems and Ballads*; the grand odes to Victor Hugo, translations from Villon, and other notable works which showed no progress after 1882. Swinburne's high position in English literature rests upon his merits as a word-musician, a master of poetic rhetoric frequently rising into starry song.

"It would perhaps be impossible," says Richard Le Gallienne in an early review from which I quote some stray sentences, "to name another poet who has had at once so great a gift of imagination and so meager a gift of fancy as Swinburne. It is not so much his lack of thought, for not infrequently his thought is profound, as his lack of fancy. Surely no other poet that ever lived has possessed so slender a supply of analogies. Of all the myriad similitudes that are sown broadcast across the world, Swinburne seems to have observed scarcely more than half a dozen. Flowers and flames, suns and seas, stars and tides: whatever his theme, to these and to one or two more primary facts of nature is he restricted for his imagery. Never was poetry so little nourished on observation of the details of life, though one admits

that in the use of this strangely restricted palette Swinburne has indeed worked miracles. Perhaps poetry (not even Shelley's) never came so near to being sheer aspiration of the soul, or emotion of the senses, as Swinburne's. It is often more like great violin-playing than poetry. Shelley and Swinburne are both *Astrophels* as no other English poet has been; 'the desire of the moth for the star' is the one passion of their work."

A page from Edmund Clarence Stedman summarizes the unique singing genius of Swinburne: "A master is needed to awake the spirit slumbering in any musical instrument. Before the advent of Swinburne we did not realize the full scope of English verse. In his hands it is like the violin of Paganini. The range of his fantasias, roulades, arias, new effects of measure and sound, is incomparable with anything hitherto known. The first emotion of one who studies even his immature work is that of wonder at the freedom and richness of his diction, the susurrus of his rhythm, his unconscious alliterations, the endless change of his syllabic harmonies—resulting in the alternate softness and strength, height and fall, riotous or chastened music, of his affluent verse. How does he produce it? Who taught him all the hidden springs of melody? He was born a tamer of words: a subduer of this most stubborn, yet most copious of the literary tongues. In his poetry we discover qualities we did not know were in the language—a softness that seemed Italian, a rugged strength we thought was German, a blithe and debonair lightness we despaired of capturing from the French. He has added a score of new stops and pedals to the instrument. He has introduced, partly from other tongues, stanzaic forms, measures and effects untried before; and has brought out the swiftness and force of meters like the anapestic, carrying each to perfection at a single trial. Words in his hands are like the ivory balls of a juggler, and all words seem to be in his hands."

The Hounds of Spring

FROM "ATALANTA IN CALYDON"

When this chorus sounded into the mid-nineteenth century, it was something new for mortal ears. As you read, it transforms "attention to enchantment." You must go back to the choruses of Shelley's "Prometheus" to find any lines approaching its dithyrambic beauty.

WHEN the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months in meadow or plain
Fills the shadows and windy places

With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain;
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
For the Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.

Come with bows bent and with emptying of quivers,
Maiden most perfect, lady of light,
With a noise of winds and many rivers,
With a clamor of waters, and with might;
Bind on thy sandals, O thou most fleet,
Over the splendor and speed of thy feet;
For the faint east quickens, the wan west shivers,
Round the feet of the day and the feet of the night.

Where shall we find her, how shall we sing to her,
Fold our hands round her knees, and cling?
O that man's heart were as fire and could spring to her,
Fire, or the strength of the streams that spring!
For the stars and the winds are unto her
As raiment, as songs of the harp-player;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

For the risen stars and the fallen cling to her,
And the southwest-wind and the west-wind sing.

For winter's rains and ruins are over,
And all the season of snows and sins;
The days dividing lover and lover,
The light that loses, the night that wins;
And time remembered is grief forgotten,
And frosts are slain and flowers begotten,
And in green underwood and cover
Blossom by blossom the spring begins.

The full streams feed on flower of rushes,
Ripe grasses trammel a travelling foot,
The faint fresh flame of the young year flushes
From leaf to flower and flower to fruit;
And fruit and leaf are as gold and fire,
And the oat is heard above the lyre,
And the hoofèd heel of a satyr crushes
The chestnut-husk at the chestnut-root.

And Pan by noon, and Bacchus by night,
Fleeter of foot than the fleet-foot kid,
Follows with dancing and fills with delight
The Mænad and the Bassarid;
And soft as lips that laugh and hide
The laughing leaves of the trees divide,
And screen from seeing and leave in sight
The god pursuing, the maiden hid.

The ivy falls with the Bacchanal's hair
Over her eyebrows hiding her eyes;
The wild vine slipping down leaves bare
Her bright breast shortening into sighs;
The wild vine slips with the weight of its leaves,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

But the berried ivy catches and cleaves
To the limbs that glitter, the feet that scare
The wolf that follows, the fawn that flies.

The Life of Man

FROM "ATALANTA IN CALYDON"

BEFORE the beginning of years,
There came to the making of man
Time, with a gift of tears;

Grief, with a glass that ran;
Pleasure, with pain for leaven;
Summer, with flowers that fell;
Remembrance fallen from heaven,
And madness risen from hell;
Strength without hands to smite;
Love that endures for a breath;
Night, the shadow of light,
And life, the shadow of death.

And the high gods took in hand
Fire, and the falling of tears,
And a measure of sliding sand
From under the feet of the years;
And froth and drift of the sea;
And dust of the laboring earth;
And bodies of things to be
In the houses of death and of birth;
And wrought with weeping and laughter
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after
And death beneath and above,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

For a day and a night and a morrow,
That his strength might endure for a span
With travail and heavy sorrow,
The holy spirit of man.

From the winds of the north and the south
They gathered as unto strife;
They breathed upon his mouth,
They filled his body with life;
Eyesight and speech they wrought
For the veils of the soul therein,
A time for labor and thought,
A time to serve and to sin;
They gave him light in his ways,
And love, and a space for delight,
And beauty and length of days,
And night, and sleep in the night.
His speech is a burning fire;
With his lips he travaileth;
In his heart is a blind desire,
In his eyes foreknowledge of death;
He weaves, and is clothed with derision;
Sows, and he shall not reap;
His life is a watch or a vision
Between a sleep and a sleep.

The Death of Meleager

FROM "ATALANTA IN CALYDON"

MELEAGER. Let your hands meet
Round the weight of my head,
Lift ye my feet
As the feet of the dead;
For the flesh of my body is molten, the limbs of it
molten as lead.

Chorus. O thy luminous face,
Thine imperious eyes!
O the grief, O the grace,
As of day when it dies!
Who is this bending over thee, lord, with tears and sup-
pression of sighs!

Meleager. Is a bride so fair?
Is a maid so meek?
With unchapleted hair,
With unfileted cheek,
Atalanta, the pure among women, whose name is as
blessing to speak.

Atalanta. I would that with feet,
Unsandalled, unshod,
Overbold, overfleet,
I had swum not nor trod
From Arcadia to Calydon, northward, a blast of the
envy of God.

Meleager. Unto each man his fate;
Unto each as he saith
In whose fingers the weight

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Of the world is as breath;
Yet I would that in clamor of battle mine hands had laid
hold upon death.

Chorus. Not with cleaving of shields
And their clash in thine ear,
When the lord of fought fields
Breaketh spearshaft from spear,
Thou art broken, our lord, thou art broken, with
travail and labor and fear.

Meleager. Would God he had found me
Beneath fresh boughs!
Would God he had bound me
Unawares in mine house,
With light in mine eyes and songs in my lips, and a
crown on my brows!

Chorus. Whence art thou sent from us?
Whither thy goal?
How art thou rent from us,
Thou that wert whole,
As with severing of eyelids and eyes, as with sundering
of body and soul!

Meleager. My heart is within me
As an ash in the fire;
Whosoever hath seen me,
Without lute, without lyre,
Shall sing of me grievous things, even things that were
ill to desire.

Chorus. Who shall raise thee
From the house of the dead?
Or what man praise thee

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

That thy praise may be said?

Alas thy beauty! alas thy body! alas thine head!

Meleager. But thou, O mother,

That dreamer of dreams,

Wilt thou bring forth another

To feel the sun's beams

When I move among shadows a shadow, and wail by
impassable streams?

Æneus. What thing wilt thou leave me

Now this thing is done?

A man wilt thou give me,

A son for my son,

For the light of mine eyes, the desire of my life, the
desirable one?

Chorus. Thou wert glad above others,

Yea, fair beyond word;

Thou wert glad among mothers;

For each man that heard

Of thee, praise there was added unto thee, as wings
to the feet of a bird.

Æneus. Who shall give back

Thy face of old years,

With travail made black,

Grown gray among fears,

Mother of sorrow, mother of cursing, mother of tears?

Meleager. Though thou art as fire

Fed with fuel in vain,

My delight, my desire,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Is more chaste than the rain,
More pure than the dewfall, more holy than stars are
that live without stain.

Atalanta. I would that as water
My life's blood had thawed,
Or as winter's wan daughter
Leaves lowland and lawn
Spring-stricken, or ever mine eyes had beheld three made
dark in thy dawn.

Chorus. When thou dravest the men
Of the chosen of Thrace,
None turned him again
Nor endured he thy face
Clothed round with the blush of the battle, with light
from a terrible place.

Æneus. Thou shouldst die as he dies
For whom none sheddeth tears;
Filling thine eyes
And fulfilling thine ears,
With the brilliance of battle, the bloom and the beauty,
the splendor of spears.

Chorus. In the ears of the world
It is sung, it is told,
And the light thereof hurled
And the noise thereof rolled
From the Acroceraunian snow to the ford of the fleece
of gold.

Meleager. Would God ye could carry me
Forth of all these;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Heap sand and bury me
By the Chersonese,
Where the thundering Bosphorus answers the thunder of
Pontic seas.

Cæneus. Dost thou mock at our praise
And the singing begun,
And the men of strange days
Praising my son
In the folds of the hills of home, high places of Calydon?

Meleager. For the dead man no home is;
Ah, better to be
What the flower of the foam is
In fields of the sea,
That the sea-waves might be as my raiment, the gulf-
stream a garment for me.

Chorus. Who shall seek thee and bring
And restore thee thy day,
When the dove dipped her wing,
And the oars won their way
Where the narrowing Symplegades whitened the straits
of Propontis with spray?

Meleager. Will ye crown me my tomb
Or exalt me my name,
Now my spirits consume,
Now my flesh is a flame?
Let the sea slake it once, and men speak of me sleeping
to praise me or shame.

Chorus. Turn back now, turn thee,
As who turns him to wake;
Though the life in thee burn thee,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Couldst thou bathe it and slake
Where the sea-ridge of Helle hangs heavier, and east
upon west waters break?

Meleager. Would the winds blow me back
Or the waves hurl me home?
Ah, to touch in the track
Where the pine learnt to roam
Cold girdles and crowns of the sea-gods, cool blossoms
of water and foam!

Chorus. The gods may release
That they made fast;
Thy soul shall have ease
In thy limbs at the last;
But what shall they give thee for life, sweet life that is
overpast?

Meleager. Not the life of men's veins,
Not of flesh that conceives;
But the grace that remains,
The fair beauty that cleaves
To the life of the rains in the grasses, the life of the
dews on the leaves.

Chorus. Thou wert helmsman and chief;
Wilt thou turn in an hour,
Thy limbs to the leaf,
Thy face to the flower,
Thy blood to the water, thy soul to the gods who divide
and devour?

Meleager. The years are hungry,
They wail all their days;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

The gods wax angry
And weary of praise;
And who shall bridle their lips? and who shall straighten
their ways?

Chorus. The gods guard over us
With sword and with rod;
Weaving shadow to cover us,
Heaping the sod,
That law may fulfil herself wholly, to darken man's face
before God.

FINAL CHORUS

Who shall contend with his lords
Or cross them or do them wrong?
Who shall bind them as with cords?
Who shall tame them as with song?
Who shall smite them as with swords?
For the hands of their kingdom are strong.

Love and Love's Mates

WE have seen thee, O Love, thou art fair; thou art
 goodly, O Love;
 Thy wings make light in the air as the wings of a dove.
 Thy feet are as winds that divide the stream of the sea;
 Earth is thy covering to hide thee, the garment of thee.
 Thou art swift and subtle and blind as a flame of fire;
 Before thee the laughter, behind thee the tears of desire;
 And twain go forth beside thee, a man with a maid;
 Her eyes are the eyes of a bride whom delight makes
 afraid;
 As the breath in the buds that stir is her bridal breath:
 But Fate is the name of her; and his name is Death.

Hertha

Hertha, the Earth, is here taken as the Source of life. Swinburne says of this poem: "Of all I have done, I rate 'Hertha' highest as a single piece, finding in it the most of lyric force and music, combined with the most of condensed and clarified thought. I think there really is a good deal compressed and condensed into that poem."

I AM that which began:
 Out of me the years roll,
 Out of me God and man;
 I am equal and whole:
 God changes, and man, and the form of them bodily;
 I am the soul.

Before ever land was,
 Before ever the sea,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Or soft hair of the grass,
Or fair limbs of the tree,
Or the flesh-colored fruit of my branches, I was, and
thy soul was in me.

First life on my sources
First drifted and swam;
Out of me are the forces
That save it or damn;
Out of me man and woman, and wild-beast and bird:
before God was, I am.

Beside or above me
Naught is there to go;
Love or unlove me,
Unknow me or know,
I am that which unloves me and loves; I am stricken,
and I am the blow.

I the mark that is missed
And the arrows that miss,
I the mouth that is kissed
And the breath in the kiss,
The search, and the sought, and the seeker, the soul and
the body that is.

I am that thing which blesses
My spirit elate;
That which caresses
With hands uncreate
My limbs unbegotten that measure the length of the
measure of fate.

But what thing dost thou now,
Looking Godward, to cry,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

“I am I, thou art thou,
I am low, thou art high”?
I am thou, whom thou seekest to find him; find thou
but thyself, thou art I.

I the grain and the furrow,
The plough-cloven clod
And the ploughshare drawn thorough,
The germ and the sod,
The deed and the doer, the seed and the sower, the dust
which is God.

Hast thou known how I fashioned thee,
Child, underground?
Fire that impassioned thee,
Iron that bound,
Dim changes of water, what thing of all these hast thou
known of or found?

Canst thou say in thine heart
Thou hast seen with thine eyes
With what cunning of art
Thou wast wrought in what wise,
By what force of what stuff thou wast shapen, and
shown on my breast to the skies?

Who hath given, who hath sold it thee,
Knowledge of me?
Has the wilderness told it thee?
Hast thou learnt of the sea?
Hast thou communed in spirit with night? have the
winds taken counsel with thee?

Have I set such a star
To show light on thy brow

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

That thou sawest from afar
What I show to thee now?

Have ye spoken as brethren together, the sun and the
mountains and thou?

What is here, dost thou know it?

What was, hast thou known?

Prophet nor poet

Nor tripod nor throne

Nor spirit nor flesh can make answer, but only thy
mother alone.

Mother, not maker,

Born, and not made;

Though her children forsake her,

Allured or afraid,

Praying prayers to the God of their fashion, she stirs
not for all that have prayed.

A creed is a rod,

And a crown is of night;

But this thing is God,

To be man with thy might,

To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit, and live
out thy life as the light.

I am in thee to save thee,

As my soul in thee saith;

Give thou as I gave thee,

Thy life-blood and breath,

Green leaves of thy labor, white flowers of thy thought,
and red fruit of thy death.

Be the ways of thy giving

As mine were to thee;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

The free life of thy living,
Be the gift of it free;
Not as servant to lord, nor as master to slave, shalt
thou give thee to me.

O children of banishment,
Souls overcast,
Were the lights ye see vanish meant
Always to last,
Ye would know not the sun overshadowing the shadows
and stars overpast.

I that saw where ye trod
The dim paths of the night
Set the shadow called God
In your skies to give light;
But the morning of manhood is risen, and the shadow-
less soul is in sight.

The tree many-rooted
That swells to the sky
With frondage red-fruited,
The life-tree am I;
In the buds of your lives is the sap of my leaves: ye
shall live and not die.

But the Gods of your fashion
That take and that give,
In their pity and passion
That scourge and forgive,
They are worms that are bred in the bark that falls
off; they shall die and not live.

My own blood is what stanches
The wounds in my bark;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Stars caught in my branches
Make day of the dark,
And are worshipped as suns till the sunrise shall tread
out their fires as a spark.

Where dead ages hide under
The live roots of the tree,
In my darkness the thunder
Makes utterance of me;
In the clash of my boughs with each other ye hear the
waves sound of the sea.

That noise is of Time,
As his feathers are spread
And his feet set to climb
Through the boughs overhead,
And my foliage rings round him and rustles, and
branches are bent with his tread.

The storm-winds of ages
Blow through me and cease,
The war-wind that rages,
The spring-wind of peace,
Ere the breath of them roughen my tresses, ere one of
my blossoms increase.

All sounds of all changes,
All shadows and lights
On the world's mountain-ranges
And steam-riven heights,
Whose tongue is the wind's tongue and language of
storm-clouds on earth-shaking nights;

All forms of all faces,
All works of all hands

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

In unsearchable places
Of time-stricken lands,
All death and all life, and all reigns and all ruins, drop
through me as sands.

Though sore be my burden
And more than ye know,
And my growth have no guerdon
But only to grow,
Yet I fail not of growing for lightnings above me or
deathworms below.

These too have their part in me,
As I too in these;
Such fire is at heart in me,
Such sap is this tree's,
Which hath in it all sounds and all secrets of infinite
lands and of seas.

In the spring-colored hours
When my mind was as May's
There brake forth of me flowers
By centuries of days,
Strong blossoms with perfume of manhood, shot out
from my spirit as rays.

And the sound of them springing
And smell of their shoots
Were as warmth and sweet singing
And strength to my roots;
And the lives of my children made perfect with freedom
of soul were my fruits.

I bid you but be;
I have need not of prayer;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

I have need of you free
As your mouths of mine air;
That my heart may be greater within me, beholding
the fruits of me fair.

More fair than strange fruit is
Of faiths ye espouse;
In me only the root is
That blooms in your boughs;
Behold now your God that ye made you, to feed him
with faith of your vows.

In the darkening and whitening
Abysses adored,
With dayspring and lightning
For lamp and for sword,
God thunders in heaven, and his angels are red with
the wrath of the Lord.

O my sons, O too dutiful
Toward Gods not of me,
Was not I enough beautiful?
Was it hard to be free?
For behold, I am with you, am in you and of you;
look forth now and see.

Lo, winged with world's wonders,
With miracles shod,
With the fires of his thunders
For raiment and rod,
God trembles in heaven, and his angels are white with
the terror of God.

For his twilight is come on him,
His anguish is here;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

And his spirits gaze dumb on him,
Grown gray from his fear;
And his hour taketh hold on him stricken, the last of
his infinite year.

Thought made him and breaks him,
Truth slays and forgives;
But to you, as time takes him,
This new thing it gives,
Even love, the belovèd Republic, that feeds upon free-
dom and lives.

For truth only is living,
Truth only is whole,
And the love of his giving
Man's polestar and pole;
Man, pulse of my centre, and fruit of my body, and
seed of my soul.

One birth of my bosom;
One beam of mine eye;
One topmost blossom
That scales the sky;
Man, equal and one with me, man that is made of
me, man that is I.

Ave atque Vale

IN MEMORY OF CHARLES BAUDELAIRE

I do not forget the idyllic loveliness of Milton's "Lycidas", the beautiful sadness of Arnold's "Thyrsis", and the lofty scorn and sorrow of Shelley's "Adonais", when I say that "Ave atque Vale" surpasses them all in somber imagination and mysterious music. Recall the touches of the true magic in its opening lines. Recall the second stanza celebrating Sappho, "the supreme head of song"; the sixth, picturing the pale Titan-woman with

"The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep";

the eleventh, the poet visioning himself as standing to do reverence to the gods and to the dead, laying—"Orestes-like—across the tomb a curl of severed hair." Recall these things, because in them you will get a feeling kindred to the high seriousness and divine dignity we find in the immortal Greeks.

But, as usual in Swinburne's poems, he ignores here some of the conventional ideas of the Christian tradition, and he appeals only to the ideals in Persephone, Apollo, and the Gothic Venus of "the hollow hill." In all this, the poet's far-flung allusions can be understood only by readers dowered with a delicate culture, including a careful literary knowledge of the antique world. But you will not regret a patient study of this great elegy; for you will at least be charmed by its fine marches of orchestral music. Only a king poet could have imagined its pictures and could have created its long resounding harmonies.

I

SHALL I strew on thee rose or rue or laurel,
 Brother, on this that was the veil of thee?
 Or quiet sea-flower molded by the sea,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Or simplest growth of meadow-sweet or sorrel,
Such as the summer-sleepy Dryads weave,
Waked up by snow-soft sudden rains at eve?
Or wilt thou rather, as on earth before,
Half-faded fiery blossoms, pale with heat
And full of bitter summer, but more sweet
To thee than gleanings of a northern shore
Trod by no tropic feet?

II

For always thee the fervid languid glories
Allured of heavier suns in mightier skies:
Thine ears knew all the wandering watery sighs
Where the sea sobs round Lesbian promontories,
The barren kiss of piteous wave to wave
That knows not where is that Leucadian grave
Which hides too deep the supreme head of song.
Ah, salt and sterile as her kisses were,
The wild sea winds her and the green gulfs bear
Hither and thither, and vex and work her wrong,
Blind gods that cannot spare.

III

Thou sawest, in thine old singing season, brother,
Secrets and sorrows unbeheld of us:
Fierce loves, and lovely leaf-buds poisonous,
Bare to thy subtler eye, but for none other
Blowing by night in some unbreathed-in clime;
The hidden harvest of luxurious time,
Sin without shape, and pleasure without speech;
And where strange dreams in a tumultuous sleep
Make the shut eyes of stricken spirits weep;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

And with each face thou sawest the shadow on each,
Seeing as men sow men reap.

IV

O sleepless heart and sombre soul unsleeping,
That were athirst for sleep and no more life
And no more love, for peace and no more strife!
Now the dim gods of death have in their keeping
Spirit and body and all the springs of song,
Is it well now where love can do no wrong,
Where stingless pleasure has no foam or fang
Behind the unopening closure of her lips?
Is it not well where soul from body slips
And flesh from bone divides without a pang
As dew from flower-bell drips?

V

It is enough; the end and the beginning
Are one thing to thee, who art past the end.
O hand unclasped of unbeholden friend,
For thee no fruits to pluck, no palms for winning,
No triumph and no labor and no lust,
Only dead yew-leaves and a little dust.
O quiet eyes wherein the light saith naught,
Whereto the day is dumb, nor any night
With obscure finger silences your sight,
Nor in your speech the sudden soul speaks thought,
Sleep, and have sleep for light.

VI

Now all strange hours and all strange loves are over,
Dreams and desires and sombre songs and sweet,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Hast thou found place at the great knees and feet
Of some pale Titan-woman like a lover,
Such as thy vision here solicited,
Under the shadow of her fair vast head,
The deep division of prodigious breasts,
The solemn slope of mighty limbs asleep,
The weight of awful tresses that still keep
The savor and shade of old-world pine-forests
Where the wet hill-winds weep?

VII

Hast thou found any likeness for thy vision?
O gardener of strange flowers, what bud, what
bloom,
Hast thou found sown, what gathered in the gloom?
What of despair, of rapture, of derision,
What of life is there, what of ill or good?
Are the fruits gray like dust or bright like blood?
Does the dim ground grow any seed of ours,
The faint fields quicken any terrene root,
In low lands where the sun and moon are mute
And all the stars keep silence? Are there flowers
At all, or any fruit?

VIII

Alas, but though my flying song flies after,
O sweet strange elder singer, thy more fleet
Singing, and footprints of thy fleeter feet,
Some dim derision of mysterious laughter
From the blind tongueless warders of the dead,
Some gainless glimpse of Proserpine's veiled head,
Some little sound of unregarded tears
Wept by effaced unprofitable eyes,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

And from pale mouths some cadence of dead sighs—
These only, these the hearkening spirit hears,
Sees only such things rise.

IX

Thou art far too far for wings of words to follow,
Far too far off for thought or any prayer.
What ails us with thee, who art wind and air?
What ails us gazing where all seen is hollow?
Yet with some fancy, yet with some desire,
Dreams pursue death as winds a flying fire,
Our dreams pursue our dead and do not find.
Still, and more swift than they, the thin flame flies,
The low light fails us in elusive skies,
Still the foiled earnest ear is deaf, and blind
Are still the eluded eyes.

X

Not thee, O never thee, in all time's changes,
Not thee, but this the sound of thy sad soul,
The shadow of thy swift spirit, this shut scroll
I lay my hand on, and not death estranges
My spirit from communion of thy song—
These memories and these melodies that throng
Veiled porches of a Muse funereal—
These I salute, these touch, these clasp and fold
As though a hand were in my hand to hold,
Or through mine ears a mourning musical
Of many mourners rolled.

XI

I among these, I also, in such station
 As when the pyre was charred, and piled the sods,
 And offering to the dead made, and their gods,
 The old mourners had, standing to make libation,
 I stand, and to the Gods and to the dead
 Do reverence without prayer or praise, and shed
 Offering to these unknown, the gods of gloom,
 And what of honey and spice my seed-lands bear,
 And what I may of fruits in this chilled air,
 And lay, Orestes-like, across the tomb
 A curl of severed hair.

XII

But by no hand nor any treason stricken,
 Not like the low-lying head of Him, the King,
 The flame that made of Troy a ruinous thing,
 Thou liest and on this dust no tears could quicken.
 There fall no tears like theirs that all men hear
 Fall tear by sweet imperishable tear
 Down the opening leaves of holy poets' pages.
 Thee not Orestes, not Electra mourns;
 But bending us-ward with memorial urns
 The most high Muses that fulfil all ages
 Weep, and our God's heart yearns.

XIII

For, sparing of his sacred strength, not often
 Among us darkling here the lord of light
 Makes manifest his music and his might
 In hearts that open and in lips that soften
 With the soft flame and heat of songs that shine.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Thy lips indeed he touched with bitter wine,
And nourished them indeed with bitter bread;
Yet surely from his hand thy soul's food came,
The fire that scarred thy spirit at his flame
Was lighted, and thine hungering heart he fed
Who feeds our hearts with fame.

XIV

Therefore he too now at thy soul's sunseting,
God of all suns and songs, he too bends down
To mix his laurel with thy cypress crown,
And save thy dust from blame and from forgetting.
Therefore he too, seeing all thou wert and art,
Compassionate, with sad and sacred heart,
Mourns thee of many his children the last dead,
And hallows with strange tears and alien sighs
Thine unmelodious mouth and sunless eyes,
And over thine irrevocable head
Sheds light from the under skies.

XV

And one weeps with him in the ways Lethean,
And stains with tears her changing bosom chill;
That obscure Venus of the hollow hill,
That thing transformed which was the Cytherean,
With lips that lost their Grecian laugh divine
Long since, and face no more called Erycine—
A ghost, a bitter and luxurious god.
Thee also with fair flesh and singing spell
Did she, a sad and second prey, compel
Into the footless places once more trod,
And shadows hot from hell.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

XVI

And now no sacred staff shall break in blossom,
No choral salutation lure to light
A spirit sick with perfume and sweet night
And love's tired eyes and hands and barren bosom.
There is no help for these things; none to mend,
And none to mar; not all our songs, O friend,
Will make death clear or make life durable.
Howbeit with rose and ivy and wild vine
And with wild notes about this dust of thine
At least I fill the place where white dreams dwell
And wreathe an unseen shrine.

XVII

Sleep; and if life was bitter to thee, pardon,
If sweet, give thanks; thou hast no more to live;
And to give thanks is good, and to forgive.
Out of the mystic and the mournful garden
Where all day through thine hands in barren braid
Wove the sick flowers of secrecy and shade,
Green buds of sorrow and sin, and remnants gray,
Sweet-smelling, pale with poison, sanguine-hearted,
Passions that sprang from sleep and thoughts that
started,
Shall death not bring us all as thee one day
Among the days departed?

XVIII

For thee, O now a silent soul, my brother,
Take at my hands this garland, and farewell.
Thin is the leaf, and chill the wintry smell,
And chill the solemn earth, a fatal mother,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

With sadder than the Niobeian womb,
And in the hollow of her breasts a tomb.
Content thee, howsoe'er, whose days are done:
There lies not any troublous thing before,
Nor sight nor sound to war against thee more,
For whom all winds are quiet as the sun,
All waters as the shore.

From "The Triumph of Time"

I WILL go back to the great sweet mother,
Mother and lover of men, the Sea.
I will go down to her, I and none other,
Close with her, kiss her, and mix her with me;
Cling to her, strive with her, hold her fast;
O fair white mother, in days long past
Born without sister, born without brother,
Set free my soul as thy soul is free.

O fair green-girdled mother of mine,
Sea, that art clothed with the sun and the rain,
Thy sweet hard kisses are strong like wine,
Thy large embraces are keen like pain.
Save me and hide me with all thy waves,
Find me one grave of thy thousand graves,
Those pure cold populous graves of thine,
Wrought without hand in a world without stain.

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside;
Sleep, and not know if she be, if she were,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Filled full with life to the eyes and hair,
As a rose is fulfilled to the rose-leaf tips
With splendid summer and perfume and pride.

This woven raiment of nights and days,
Were it once cast off and unwound from me.
Naked and glad would I walk in thy ways,
Alive and aware of thy waves and thee;
Clear of the whole world, hidden at home,
Clothed with the green, and crowned with the foam,
A pulse of the life of thy straits and bays,
A vein in the heart of the streams of the Sea.

Fair mother, fed with the lives of men,
Thou art subtle and cruel of heart, men say;
Thou hast taken, and shalt not render again;
Thou art full of thy dead, and cold as they.
But death is the worst that comes of thee;
Thou art fed with our dead, O Mother, O Sea,
But when hast thou fed on our hearts? or when
Having given us love, hast thou taken away?

O tender-hearted, O perfect lover,
Thy lips are bitter, and sweet thine heart.
The hopes that hurt and the dreams that hover,
Shall they not vanish away and apart?
But thou, thou art sure, thou art older than earth;
Thou art strong for death and fruitful of birth;
Thy depths conceal and thy gulfs discover;
From the first thou wert; in the end thou art.

There lived a singer in France of old
By the tideless dolorous midland sea.
In a land of sand and ruin and gold
There shone one woman, and none but she.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

And finding life for her love's sake fail,
Being fain to see her, he bade set sail,
Touched land, and saw her as life grew cold,
And praised God, seeing; and so died he.

Died, praising God for his gift and grace:
For she bowed down to him weeping, and said
"Live;" and her tears were shed on his face
Or ever the life in his face was shed.
The sharp tears fell through her hair, and stung
Once, and her close lips touched him and clung
Once, and grew one with his lips for a space;
And so drew back, and the man was dead.

O brother, the gods were good to you.
Sleep, and be glad while the world endures.
Be well content as the years wear through;
Give thanks for life, and the loves and lures;
Give thanks for life, O brother, and death,
For the sweet last sound of her feet, her breath,
For gifts she gave you, gracious and few,
Tears and kisses, that lady of yours.

Rest, and be glad of the gods; but I,
How shall I praise them, or how take rest?
There is not room under all the sky
For me that know not of worst or best,
Dream or desire of the days before,
Sweet things or bitterness, any more.
Love will not come to me now though I die,
As love came close to you, breast to breast.

I shall never be friends again with roses;
I shall loathe sweet tunes, where a note grown strong
Relents and recoils, and climbs and closes,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

As a wave of the sea turned back by song,
There are sounds where the soul's delight takes fire,
Face to face with its own desire;
A delight that rebels, a desire that reposes;
I shall hate sweet music my whole life long.

The pulse of war and passion of wonder,
The heavens that murmur, the sounds that shine,
The stars that sing and the loves that thunder,
The music burning at heart like wine,
An armed archangel whose hands raise up
All senses mixed in the spirit's cup
Till flesh and spirit are molten in sunder—
These things are over, and no more mine.

These were a part of the playing I heard
Once, ere my love and my heart were at strife;
Love that sings and hath wings as a bird,
Balm of the wound and heft of the knife.
Fairer than earth is the sea, and sleep
Than overwatching of eyes that weep,
Now time has done with his one sweet word,
The wine and leaven of lovely life.

I shall go my ways, tread out my measure,
Fill the days of my daily breath
With fugitive things not good to treasure,
Do as the world doth, say as it saith;
But if we had loved each other—O sweet,
Had you felt, lying under the palms of your feet,
The heart of my heart, beating harder with pleasure
To feel you tread it to dust and death—

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Ah, had I not taken my life up and given
All that life gives and the years let go,
The wine and honey, the balm and leaven,
The dreams reared high and the hopes brought low?
Come life, come death, not a word be said;
Should I lose you living, and vex you dead?
I never shall tell you on earth; and in heaven,
If I cry to you then, will you hear or know?

The Garden of Proserpine

The despair in this poem, its feeling that death ends all, must be looked on only as the outcry of a passing mood of the poet—a mood that sometimes beclouds men in the midst of the turmoils and exhaustions of this mortal struggle. In many other places, Swinburne speaks as one having faith in an after-life; although it is usually pictured as a vague existence where the departed shades meet in some dim Elysium. Yet in these avowals, he draws toward the robust faith of the two great heroes of his reverence—Victor Hugo and Joseph Mazzini.

HERE, where the world is quiet,
Here, where all trouble seems
Dead winds' and spent waves' riot
In doubtful dreams of dreams;
I watch the green field growing
For reaping folk and sowing,
For harvest time and mowing,
A sleepy world of streams.

I am tired of tears and laughter,
And men that laugh and weep,
Of what may come hereafter

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

For men that sow to reap:
I am weary of days and hours,
Blown buds of barren flowers,
Desires and dreams and powers,
And everything but sleep.

Here life has death for neighbor,
And far from eye or ear
Wan waves and wet winds labor,
Weak ships and spirits steer;
They drive adrift, and whither
They wot not who make thither;
But no such winds blow hither,
And no such things grow here.

No growth of moor or coppice,
No heather-flower or vine,
But bloomless buds of poppies,
Green grapes of Proserpine,
Pale beds of blowing rushes
Where no leaf blooms or blushes,
Save this whereout she crushes
For dead men deadly wine.

Pale, without name or number,
In fruitless fields of corn,
They bow themselves and slumber
All night till light is born;
And like a soul belated,
In hell and heaven unmated,
By cloud and mist abated
Comes out of darkness morn.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Though one were strong as seven,
He too with death shall dwell,
Nor wake with wings in heaven,
Nor weep for pains in hell;
Though one were fair as roses,
His beauty clouds and closes;
And well though love reposes,
In the end it is not well.

Pale, beyond porch and portal,
Crowned with calm leaves, she stands
Who gathers all things mortal
With cold immortal hands;
Her languid lips are sweeter
Than love's who fears to greet her,
To men that mix and meet her
From many times and lands.

She waits for each and other,
She waits for all men born;
Forgets the earth her mother,
The life of fruits and corn;
And spring and seed and swallow
Take wing for her and follow
Where summer song rings hollow
And flowers are put to scorn.

There go the loves that wither,
The old loves with wearier wings;
And all dead years draw thither,
And all disastrous things;
Dead dreams of days forsaken,
Blind buds that snows have shaken,
Wild leaves that winds have taken,
Red strays of ruined springs.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

We are not sure of sorrow,
And joy was never sure;
To-day will die to-morrow
Time stoops to no man's lure;
And love, grown faint and fretful,
With lips but half regretful
Sighs, and with eyes forgetful
Weeps that no loves endure.

From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods may be
That no life lives for ever;
That dead men rise up never;
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea.

Then star nor sun shall waken,
Nor any change of light:
Nor sound of waters shaken,
Nor any sound or sight:
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,
Nor days nor things diurnal;
Only the sleep eternal
In an eternal night.

The Last Oracle

(A. D. 361)

This remarkable poem refers to that high-minded emperor, Julian the Apostate, and to the time in the 4th century when he (misunderstanding the true Christ) withdrew from the Christian church, published a decree granting toleration to all religions, while hoping to re-establish the picturesque worship of Apollo. Julian found the austerities of the Christian faith of his time too somber for his Pagan spirit. Under the light and leading of the nobler mysteries, he hoped to restore the old paganism with its mystic and joyous rites, and to unite all the older religions into an imperial church.

But we are told that Julian, on consulting the Oracle, heard the voice for the last time—heard it declare that the glorious dwelling of the bright God had fallen and that not a cell was left him—no roof, no cover, no blossoming prophet laurel. What a lofty music of grief is in this Swinburnian elegy, what a beautiful sorrow of song, at the grave of the beautiful God!

YEARS have risen and fallen in darkness or in twilight,

Ages waxed and waned that knew not thee nor thine,
White the world sought light by night and sought not thy light,

Since the sad last pilgrim left thy dark mid shrine.
Dark the shrine, and dumb the fount of song thence welling,

Save for words more sad than tears of blood, that said:

*Tell the king, on earth has fallen the glorious dwelling,
And the water-springs that spake are quenched and dead.*

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

*Not a cell is left the god, no roof, no cover;
In his hand the prophet laurel flowers no more.*
And the great king's high sad heart, thy true last lover,
Felt thine answer pierce and cleave it to the core.
And he bowed down his hopeless head
In the drift of the wild world's tide,
And dying, *Thou hast conquered*, he said,
Galilæan: he said it, and died.
And the world that was thine and was ours
When the Graces took hands with the Hours
Grew cold as a winter wave
In the wind from a wide-mouthed grave,
As a gulf wide open to swallow
The light that the world held dear.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Age on age thy mouth was mute, thy face was hidden,
And the lips and eyes that loved thee blind and dumb:
Song forsook their tongues that held thy name forbidden,
Light their eyes that saw the strange god's kingdom
come.
Fire for light and hell for heaven and psalms for pæans
Filled the clearest eyes and lips most sweet of song,
When for chant of Greeks the wail of Galilæans
Made the whole world moan with hymns of wrath and
wrong.
Yea, not yet we see thee, father, as they saw thee,
They that worshipped when the world was theirs and
thine,
They whose words had power by thine own power to
draw thee
Down from heaven till earth seemed more than heaven
divine.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

For the shades are about us that hover
When darkness is half withdrawn,
And the skirts of the dead night cover
The face of the live new dawn.

For the past is not utterly past,
Though the word on its lips be the last,
And the time be gone by with its creed
When men were as beasts that bled,
As sheep or as swine that wallow,

In the shambles of faith and of fear.

O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Yet it may be, lord and father, could we know it,
We that love thee for our darkness shall have light
More than ever prophet hailed of old, or poet
Standing crowned and robed and sovereign in thy
sight.

To the likeness of one God their dreams enthralled thee,
Who wast greater than all gods that waned and
grew;

Son of God the shining son of Time they called thee,
Who wast older, O our father, than they knew.

For no thought of man made gods to love or honor
Ere the song within the silent soul began;

Nor might earth in dream or deed take heaven upon her
Till the word was clothed with speech by lips of man.
And the word and the life wast thou,

The spirit of man and the breath;
And before thee the gods that bow
Take life at thine hands and death.

For these are as ghosts that wane,
That are gone in an age or twain;
Harsh, merciful, passionate, pure,
They perish, but thou shalt endure;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Be their life as the swan's or the swallow,
They pass as the flight of a year.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Thou the word, the light, the life, the breath, the glory,
Strong to help and heal, to lighten and to slay,
Thine is all the song of man, the world's whole story;
Not of morning and of evening is thy day.
Old and younger gods are buried or begotten
From uprising to downsetting of thy sun,
Risen from eastward, fallen to westward and forgotten,
And their springs are many, but their end is one.
Divers births of godheads find one death appointed,
As the soul whence each was born makes room for
each;

God by god goes out, discrowned and disanointed,
But the soul stands fast that gave them shape and
speech.

Is the sun yet cast out of heaven?
Is the song yet cast out of man?
Life that had song for its leaven
To quicken the blood that ran
Through the veins of the songless years
More bitter and cold than tears;
Heaven that had thee for its one
Light, life, word, witness, O Sun—
Are they soundless and sightless and hollow,
Without eye, without speech, without ear?
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Time arose, and smote thee silent at his warning;
Change and darkness fell on men that fell from thee;
Dark thou satest, veiled with light, behind the morning,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Till the soul of man should lift up eyes and see.
Till the blind mute soul get speech again and eyesight,
Man may worship not the light of life within;
In his sight the stars whose fires grow dark in thy sight
Shine as sunbeams on the night of death and sin.
Time again is risen with mightier word of warning,
Change hath blown again a blast of louder breath;
Clothed with clouds and stars and dreams that melt in
morning,

Lo, the gods that ruled by grace of sin and death!
They are conquered, they break, they are stricken,
Whose might made the whole world pale;
They are dust that shall rise not or quicken
Though the world for their death's sake wail.
As a hound on a wild beast's trace,
So time has their godhead in chase;
As wolves when the hunt makes head,
They are scattered, they fly, they are fled;
They are fled beyond hail, beyond hollo,
And the cry of the chase, and the cheer.
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

Day by day thy shadow shines in heaven beholden,
Even the sun, the shining shadow of thy face:
King, the ways of heaven before thy feet grow golden;
God, the soul of earth is kindled with thy grace.
In thy lips the speech of man whence gods were
fashioned,
In thy soul the thought that makes them and un-
makes;
By thy light and heat incarnate and impassioned,
Soul to soul of man gives light for light, and takes.
As they knew thy name of old time could we know it,
Healer called of sickness, slayer invoked of wrong,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Light of eyes that saw thy light, god, king, priest, poet,
Song should bring thee back to heal us with thy song.
For thy kingdom is past not away,
Nor thy power from the place thereof hurled:
Out of heaven they shall cast not the day,
They shall cast not out song from the world.
By the song and the light they give,
We know thy works that they live:
With the gift thou hast given us of speech
We praise, we adore, we beseech,
We arise at thy bidding, and follow,
We cry to thee, answer, appear,
O father of all of us, Paian, Apollo,
Destroyer and healer, hear!

In the Bay

All his life long Swinburne poured out lyrics in passionate homage to Victor Hugo and Joseph Mazzini; but, in this resounding panegyric, he glorifies that powerful precursor of Shakespeare—Christopher Marlowe.

I.

BEYOND the hollow sunset, ere a star
Take heart in heaven from eastward, while the
west,
Fulfilled of watery resonance and rest,
Is as a port with clouds for harbor-bar
To fold the fleet in of the winds from far
That stir no plume now of the bland sea's breast;

II.

Above the soft sweep of the breathless bay
South-westward, far past flight of night and day,
Lower than the sunken sunset sings, and higher
Than dawn can freak the front of heaven with fire—
My thought with eyes and wings made wide makes way
To find the place of souls that I desire.

III.

If any place for any soul there be,
Disrobed and disentranced; if the might,
The fire and force that filled with ardent light
The souls whose shadow is half the light we see,
Survive, and be suppressed not of the night—
This hour should show what all day hid from me.

IV.

Night knows not, neither is it shown to day,
By sunlight nor by starlight is it shown,
Nor to the full moon's eye nor footfall known,
Their world's untrodden and unkindled way;
Nor is the breath nor music of it blown
With sounds of winter or with winds of May.

V.

But here, where light and darkness reconciled
Hold earth between them as a weanling child
Between the balanced hands of death and birth,
Even as they held the new-born shape of earth
When first life trembled in her limbs and smiled—
Here hope might think to find what hope were worth.

VI.

Past Hades, past Elysium, past the long,
 Slow, smooth, strong lapse of Lethe; past the toil
 Wherein all souls are taken as a spoil,
 The Stygian web of waters—if your song
 Be quenched not, O our brethren, but be strong
 As ere ye too shook off our temporal coil;

VII.

If yet these twain survive your worldly breath,
 Joy trampling sorrow, life devouring death,
 If perfect life possess your life all through,
 And like your words your souls be deathless too,
 To-night, of all whom night encompasseth,
 My soul would commune with one soul of you.

VIII.

Above the sunset, might I see thine eyes
 That were above the sun-dawn in our skies,
 Son of the songs of morning—thine that were
 First lights to lighten that rekindling air
 Wherethrough men saw the front of England rise,
 And heard thine loudest of the lyrenotes there—

IX.

If yet thy fire have not one spark the less,
 O Titan, born of her a Titaness,
 Across the sunrise and the sunset's mark
 Send of thy lyre one sound, thy fire one spark,
 To change this face of our unworthiness,
 Across this hour dividing light from dark;

X.

To change this face of our chill time, that hears
No song like thine of all that crowd its ears,
Of all its lights that lighten all day long
Sees none like thy most fleet and fiery sphere's
Out-lightening Sirius—in its twilight throng,
No thunder and no sunrise like thy song.

XI.

Hath not the sea-wind swept the sea-line bare
To pave with stainless fire, through stainless air,
A passage for thine heavenlier feet to tread
Ungrieved of earthly floor-work? hath it spread
No covering splendid as the sun-god's hair
To veil or to reveal thy lordlier head?

XII.

Hath not the sunset strewn across the sea
A way majestical enough for thee?
What hour save this should be thine hour—and mine,
If thou have care of any less divine
Than thine own soul; if thou take thought of me,
Marlowe, as all my soul takes thought of thine?

XIII.

Before the moon's face as before the sun,
The morning star and evening star are one
For all men's lands as England. Oh, if night
Hang hard upon us—ere our day take flight,
Shed thou some comfort from thy day long done
On us pale children of the latter light!

XIV.

For surely, brother and master, and lord and king,
Where'er thy footfall and thy face make spring
In all souls' eyes that meet thee wheresoe'er,
And have thy soul for sunshine and sweet air—
Some late love of thine old live land should cling,
Some living love of England, round thee there.

XV.

Here from her shore, across her sunniest sea,
My soul makes question of the sun for thee,
And waves and beams make answer. When thy feet
Made her ways flowerier and their flowers more sweet
With childlike passage of a god to be,
Like spray these waves cast off her foemen's fleet.

XVI.

Like foam they flung it from her, and like weed
Its wrecks were washed from scornful shoal to shoal,
From rock to rock reverberate; and the whole
Sea laughed and lightened with a deathless deed
That sowed our enemies in her field for seed,
And made her shores fit harborage for thy soul.

XVII.

Then in her green south fields, a poor man's child,
Thou hadst thy short sweet fill of half-blown joy,
That ripens all of us for time to cloy
With full-blown pain and passion, ere the wild
World caught thee by the fiery heart, and smiled
To make so swift end of the godlike boy.

XVIII.

For thou, if ever godlike foot there trod
These fields of ours, wert surely like a god.
Who knows what splendor of strange dreams was shed
With sacred shadow and glimmer of gold and red,
From hallowed windows, over stone and sod,
On thine unbowed, bright, insubmissive head?

XIX.

The shadow stayed not, but the splendor stays,
Our brother, till the last of English days.
No day nor night on English earth shall be
Forever, spring nor summer, Junes nor Mays,
But somewhat as a sound or gleam of thee
Shall come on us like morning from the sea.

XX.

Like sunrise never wholly risen, nor yet
Quenched; or like sunset never wholly set,
A light to lighten as from living eyes
The cold, unlit, close lids of one that lies
Dead, or a ray returned from death's far skies
To fire us living lest our lives forget.

XXI.

For in that heaven what light of lights may be,
What splendor of what stars, what spheres of flame
Sounding, that none may number nor may name,
We know not, even thy brethren; yea, not we
Whose eyes desire the light that lightened thee,
Whose ways and thine are one way and the same.

XXII.

But if the riddles that in sleep we read,
And trust them not, be flattering truth indeed,
As he that rose our mightiest called them—he,
Much higher than thou as thou much higher than we—
There, might we say, all flowers of all our seed,
All singing souls are as one sounding sea.

XXIII.

All those that here were of thy kind and kin,
Beside thee and below thee, full of love,
Full-souled for song—and one alone above
Whose only light folds all your glories in—
With all birds' notes from nightingale to dove
Fill the world whither we too fain would win;

XXIV.

The world that sees in heaven the sovereign light
Of sunlike Shakespeare, and the fiery night
Whose stars were watched of Webster; and beneath,
The twin-souled brethren of the single wreath,
Grown in king's gardens, plucked from pastoral heath,
Wrought with all flowers for all men's heart's delight.

XXV.

And that fixed fervor, iron-red like Mars,
In the mid moving tide of tenderer stars,
That burned on loves and deeds the darkest done,
Athwart the incestuous prisoner's bridehouse bars;
And thine, most highest of all their fires but one,
Our morning star, sole risen before the sun.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

XXVI.

And one light risen since theirs to run such race
Thou hast seen, O Phosphor, from thy pride of place.
Thou hast seen Shelley, him that was to thee
As light to fire or dawn to lightning; me—
Me likewise, O our brother, shalt thou see,
And I behold thee, face to glorious face?

XXVII.

You twain the same swift year of manhood swept
Down the steep darkness, and our father wept.
And from the gleam of Apollonian tears
A holier aureole rounds your memories, kept
Most fervent-fresh of all the singing spheres,
And April-colored through all months and years.

XXVIII.

You twain, fate spared not half your fiery span;
The longer date fulfils the lesser man.
Ye from beyond the dark dividing date
Stand smiling, crowned as gods, with foot on fate.
For stronger was your blessing than his ban,
And earliest whom he struck, he struck too late.

XXIX.

Yet love and loathing, faith and unfaith yet
Bind less to greater souls in unison,
And one desire that makes three spirits as one
Takes great and small as in one spiritual net
Woven out of hope toward what shall yet be done
Ere hate or love remember or forget;

XXX.

Woven out of faith and hope and love too great
To bear the bonds of life and death and fate;
Woven out of love and hope and faith too dear
To take the print of doubt and change and fear;
And interwoven with lines of wrath and hate
Blood-red with soils of many a sanguine year.

XXXI.

Who cannot hate, can love not: if he grieve,
His tears are barren as the unfruitful rain
That rears no harvest from the green sea's plain,
And as thorns crackling this man's laugh is vain.
Nor can belief touch, kindle, smite, relieve
His heart who has not heart to disbelieve.

XXXII.

But you, most perfect in your hate and love,
Our great twin-spirited brethren; you that stand
Head by head glittering, hand made fast in hand,
And underfoot the fang-drawn worm that strove
To wound you living; from so far above,
Look love, not scorn, on ours that was your land.

XXXIII.

For love we lack, and help and heat and light
To clothe us and to comfort us with might.
What help is ours to take or give? but ye—
Oh, more than sunrise to the blind cold sea,
That wailed aloud with all her waves all night,
Much more, being much more glorious, should you be.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

XXXIV.

As fire to frost, as ease to toil, as dew
To flowerless fields, as sleep to slackening pain,
As hope to souls long weaned from hope again
Returning, or as blood revived anew
To dry-drawn limbs and every pulseless vein—
Even so toward us should no man be but you.

XXXV.

One rose before the sunrise was, and one
Before the sunset, lovelier than the sun.
And now the heaven is dark and bright and loud
With wind and starry drift and moon and cloud,
And night's cry rings in straining sheet and shroud:
What help is ours if hope like yours be none?

XXXVI.

O well-beloved, our brethren, if ye be,
Then are we not forsaken. This kind earth
Made fragrant once for all time with your birth,
And bright for all men with your love, and worth
The clasp and kiss and wedlock of the sea,
Were not your mother if not your brethren we.

XXXVII.

Because the days were dark with gods and kings,
And in time's hand the old hours of time as rods,
When force and fear set hope and faith at odds,
Ye failed not, nor abased your plume-plucked wings;
And we that front not more disastrous things,
How should we fail in face of kings and gods?

XXXVIII.

For now the deep dense plumes of night are thinned
Surely with winnowing of the glimmering wind
Whose feet are fledged with morning; and the breath
Begins in heaven that sings the dark to death.
And all the night wherein men groaned and sinned
Sickens at heart to hear what sundawn saith.

XXXIX.

O first-born sons of hope and fairest! ye
Whose prows first clove the thought-unsounded sea
Whence all the dark dead centuries rose to bar
The spirit of man lest truth should make him free,
The sunrise and the sunset, seeing one star,
Take heart as we to know you that ye are.

XL.

Ye rise not, and ye set not: we that say
Ye rise and set like hopes that set and rise
Look yet but seaward from a land-blocked bay;
But where at last the sea's line is the sky's,
And truth and hope one sunlight in your eyes,
No sunrise and no sunset marks their day.

Mater Dolorosa

*Citoyen, lui dit Enjolras, ma mère, c'est la République.—
"Les Misérables."*

WHO is it that sits by the way, by the wild way-
side,

In a rent stained raiment, the robe of a cast-off bride,
In the dust, in the rainfall sitting, with soiled feet bare,
With the night for a garment upon her, with torn wet
hair?

She is fairer of face than the daughters of men, and her
eyes,

Worn through with her tears, are deep as the depth of
skies.

This is she for whose sake being fallen, for whose abject
sake,

Earth groans in the blackness of darkness, and men's
hearts break.

This is she for whose love, having seen her, the men
that were

Poured life out as water, and shed their souls upon air.

This is she for whose glory their years were counted as
foam;

Whose face was a light upon Greece, was a fire upon
Rome.

Is it now not surely a vain thing, a foolish and vain,
To sit down by her, mourn to her, serve her, partake in
the pain?

She is gray with the dust of time on his manifold ways,
Where her faint feet stumble and falter through year-
long days.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Shall she help us at all, O fools, give fruit or give fame,
Who herself is a name despised, a rejected name?

We have not served her for guerdon. If any do so,
That his mouth may be sweet with such honey, we care
not to know.

We have drunk from a wine-unsweetened, a perilous
cup,

A draught very bitter. The kings of the earth stood up,
And the rulers took counsel together, to smite her and
slay;

And the blood of her wounds is given us to drink to-day.

Can these bones live? or the leaves that are dead leaves
bud?

Or the dead blood drawn from her veins be in your veins
blood?

Will ye gather up water again that was drawn and shed?
In the blood is the life of the veins, and her veins are
dead.

For the lives that are over are over, and past things past;
She had her day, and it is not; was first, and is last.

Is it nothing unto you, then, all ye that pass by,
If her breath be left in her lips, if she live now or die?
Behold now, O people, and say if she be not fair,
Whom your fathers followed to find her, with praise and
prayer,

And rejoiced, having found her, though roof they had
none, nor bread.

But ye care not: what is it to you if her day be dead?

It was well with our fathers; their sound was in all
men's lands;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

There was fire in their hearts, and the hunger of fight
in their hands.

Naked and strong they went forth in her strength like
flame,

For her love and her name's sake of old, her republican
name.

But their children by kings made quiet, by priests made
wise,

Love better the heat of their hearths than the light of
her eyes.

Are they children of these thy children indeed, who
have sold,

O golden goddess, the light of thy face for gold?

Are they sons indeed of the sons of thy dayspring of
hope,

Whose lives are in fief of an emperor, whose souls of a
Pope?

Hide then thine head, O belovèd! thy time is done;

Thy kingdom is broken in heaven, and blind thy sun.

What sleep is upon you, to dream she indeed shall rise,
When the hopes are dead in her heart as the tears in her
eyes?

If ye sing of her dead, will she stir? if ye weep for her,
weep?

Come away now, leave her: what hath she to do but
sleep?

But ye that mourn are alive, and have years to be;

And life is good, and the world is wiser than we.

Yea, wise is the world and mighty, with years to give,

And years to promise; but how long now shall it live?

And foolish and poor is faith, and her ways are bare,

Till she find the way of the sun, and the morning air.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

In that hour shall this dead face shine as the face of the
sun,
And the soul of man and her soul and the world's be one.

From "Mater Triumphalis"

[TO LIBERTY]

I AM thine harp between thine hands, O mother!
All my strong chords are strained with love of
thee.

We grapple in love and wrestle, as each with other
Wrestle the wind and the unreluctant sea.

I am no courtier of thee sober-suited,
Who loves a little for a little pay.
Me not thy winds and storms, nor thrones disrooted,
Nor molten crowns, nor thine own sins, dismay.

Sinned hast thou sometime, therefore art thou sinless;
Stained hast thou been, who art therefore without
stain;
Even as man's soul is kin to thee, but kinless
Thou, in whose womb Time sows the all-various
grain.

I do not bid thee spare me, O dreadful mother!
I pray thee that thou spare not, of thy grace.
How were it with me then, if ever another
Should come to stand before thee in this my place?

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion,
Full of thy cry, sonorous with thy breath;

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

The graves of souls born worms, and creeds grown
 carriou

Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ-keys are thunders,
And I, beneath thy foot, the pedal prest;

Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line;
But thou from dawn to sunseting shalt cherish
The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Reared between night and noon and truth and error,
Each twilight-travelling bird that trills and screams
Sickens at midday, nor can face for terror
The imperious heaven's inevitable extremes.

I have no spirit of skill with equal fingers
At sign to sharpen or to slacken strings;
I keep no time of song with gold-perched singers
And chirp of linnets on the wrists of kings.

I am thy storm-thrush of the days that darken,
Thy petrel in the foam that bears thy bark
To port through night and tempest: if thou hearken,
My voice is in thy heaven before the lark.

My song is in the mist that hides thy morning,
My cry is up before the day for thee;
I have heard thee and beheld thee and give warning,
Before thy wheels divide the sky and sea.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Birds shall wake with thee voiced and feathered fairer,
To see in summer what I see in spring:
I have eyes and heart to endure thee, O thunder-bearer,
And they shall be who shall have tongues to sing.

I have love at least, and have not fear, and part not
From thine unnavigable and wingless way;
Thou tarriest, and I have not said thou art not,
Nor all thy night long have denied thy day.

Darkness to daylight shall lift up thy pæan,
Hill to hill thunder, vale cry back to vale,
With wind-notes as of eagles Æschylean,
And Sappho singing in the nightingale.

Sung to by mighty sons of dawn and daughters,
Of this night's songs thine ear shall keep but one—
That supreme song which shook the channelled waters,
And called thee skyward as God calls the sun.

Come, though all heaven again be fire above thee;
Though death before thee come to clear thy sky;
Let us but see in his thy face who love thee;
Yea, though thou slay us, arise, and let us die.

From Prelude to "Tristram of Lyonesse"

Edmund Clarence Stedman, in his "Victorian Poets", says, "Not a few consider 'Tristram of Lyonesse' to be Swinburne's most attractive and ideal narrative poem. The conception of the Arthurian legend is distinct from that of either Tennyson or Arnold, and the verse is rich with desire, foreboding and pathetic beauty."

LOVE, that is first and last of all things made,
 The light that has the living world for shade,
 The spirit that for temporal veil has on
 The souls of all men woven in unison,
 One fiery raiment with all lives inwrought
 And lights of sunny and starry deed and thought,
 And alway through new act and passion new
 Shines the divine same body and beauty through,
 The body spiritual of fire and light
 That is to worldly noon as noon to night—
 Love, that is flesh upon the spirit of man
 And spirit within the flesh whence breath began—
 Love, that keeps all the choir of lives in chime:
 Love, that is blood within the veins of time—
 That wrought the whole world without stroke of hand,
 Shaping the breadth of sea, the length of land,
 And with the pulse and motion of his breath
 Through the great heart of the earth strikes life and
 death,
 The sweet twain chords that make the sweet tune live
 Through day and night of things alternative,
 Through silence and through sound of stress and strife,
 And ebb and flow of dying death and life—
 Love, that sounds loud or light in all men's ears,
 Whence all men's eyes take fire from sparks of tears,
 That binds on all men's feet or chains or wings—

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Love, that is root and fruit of terrene things—
Love, that the whole world's waters shall not drown,
The whole world's fiery forces not burn down—
Love, that what time his own hands guard his head
The whole world's wrath and strength shall not strike
dead—

Love, that if once his own hands make his grave
The whole world's pity and sorrow shall not save—
Love, that for very life shall not be sold,
Nor bought nor bound with iron nor with gold;
So strong that heaven, could love bid heaven farewell,
Would turn to fruitless and unflowering hell;
So sweet that hell, to hell could love be given,
Would turn to splendid and sonorous heaven—
Love that is fire within thee and light above,
And lives by grace of nothing but of love—
Through many and lovely thoughts and much desire
Led these twain to the life of tears and fire;
Through many and lovely days and much delight
Led these twain to the lifeless life of night.

Yea, but what then? albeit all this were thus,
And soul smote soul and left it ruinous,
And love led love as eyeless men lead men,
Through chance by chance to deathward—Ah, what
then?

Hath love not likewise led them further yet,
Out through the years where memories rise and set,
Some large as suns, some moon-like warm and pale,
Some starry-sighted, some through clouds that sail
Seen as red flame through spectral float of fume,
Each with the blush of its own special bloom
On the fair face of its own colored light,
Distinguishable in all the host of night,
Divisible from all the radiant rest

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

And separable in splendor? Hath the best
Light of love's all, of all that burn and move,
A better heaven than heaven is? Hath not love
Made for all these their sweet particular air
To shine in, their own beams and names to bear,
Their ways to wander and their wards to keep,
Till story and song and glory and all things sleep?
Hath he not plucked from death of lovers dead
Their musical soft memories, and kept red
The rose of their remembrance in men's eyes,
The sunsets of their stories in his skies,
The blush of their dead blood in lips that speak
Of their dead lives, and in the listener's cheek
That trembles with the kindling pity lit
In gracious hearts for some sweet fever-fit,
A fiery pity enkindled of pure thought
By tales that make their honey out of nought,
The faithless faith that lives without belief
Its light life through, the griefless ghost of grief?
Yea, as warm night refashions the sere blood
In storm-struck petal or in sun-struck bud,
With tender hours and tempering dew to cure
The hunger and thirst of day's distemperature
And ravin of the dry discoloring hours,
Hath he not bid relume their flameless flowers
With summer fire and heat of lamping song,
And bid the short-lived things, long dead, live long,
And thought remake their wan funereal fames,
And the sweet shining signs of women's names
That mark the months out and the weeks anew
He moves in changeless change of seasons through
To fill the days up of his dateless year
Flame from Queen Helen to Queen Guenevere?

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

For first of all the sphery signs whereby
Love severs light from darkness, and most high,
In the white front of January there glows
The rose-red sign of Helen like a rose:
And gold-eyed as the shore-flower shelterless
Whereon the sharp-breathed sea blows bitterness,
A storm-star that the seafarers of love
Strain their wind-wearied eyes for glimpses of,
Shoots keen through February's grey frost and damp
The lamplike star of Hero for a lamp,
The star that Marlowe sang into our skies
With mouth of gold, and morning in his eyes;
And in clear March across the rough blue sea
The signal sapphire of Alcyone
Makes bright the blown brows of the wind-foot year;
And shining like a sunbeam-smitten tear
Full ere it fall, the fair next sign in sight
Burns opal-wise with April-colored light
When air is quick with song and rain and flame,
My birth-month star that in love's heaven hath name
Iseult, a light of blossom and beam and shower,
My singing sign that makes the song-tree flower;
Next like a pale and burning pearl beyond
The rose-white sphere of flower-named Rosamond
Signs the sweet head of Maytime; and for June
Flares like an angered and storm-reddening moon
Her signal sphere, whose Carthaginian pyre
Shadowed her traitor's flying sail with fire;
Next, glittering as the wine-bright jacinth stone,
A star south-risen that first to music shone,
The keen girl-star of golden Juliet bears
Light northward to the month whose forehead wears
Her name for flower upon it, and his trees
Mix their deep English song with Veronese;
And like an awful sovereign chrysolite

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Burning, the supreme fire that blinds the night,
The hot gold head of Venus kissed by Mars,
A sun-flower among small sphered flowers of stars,
The light of Cleopatra fills and burns
The hollow of heaven whence ardent August yearns;
And fixed and shining as the sister-shed
Sweet tears for Phaeton disorbed and dead,
The pale bright autumn's amber-colored sphere,
That through September sees the saddening year
As love sees change through sorrow, hath to name
Francesca's; and the star that watches flame
The embers of the harvest overgone
Is Thisbe's, slain of love in Babylon,
Set in the golden girdle of sweet signs
A blood-bright ruby; last save one light shines
An eastern wonder of sphery chrysopras,
The star that made men mad, Angelica's;
And latest named and lordliest, with a sound
Of swords and harps in heaven that ring it round,
Last love-light and last love-song of the year's,
Gleams like a glorious emerald Guenevere's.
These are the signs wherethrough the year sees move,
Full of the sun, the sun-god which is Love.

A Match

IF love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or gray grief;
If love were what the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

If you were April's lady
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for day with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down Love together,
Pluck out his flying-feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain.

Rondel

KISSING her hair I sat against her feet,
Wove and unwove it, wound and found it sweet;
Made fast therewith her hands, drew down her eyes,
Deep as deep flowers and dreamy like dim skies;
With her own tresses bound and found her fair,
Kissing her hair.

Sleep were no sweeter than her face to me,
Sleep of cold sea-bloom under the cold sea;
What pain could get between my face and hers?
What new sweet thing would love not relish worse?
Unless, perhaps, white death had kissed me there,
Kissing her hair?

Cor Cordium

[SHELLEY]

O HEART of hearts, the chalice of love's fire,
Hid round with flowers and all the bounty of
bloom;

O wonderful and perfect heart, for whom
The lyrist liberty made life a lyre;

O heavenly heart, at whose most dear desire
Dead love, living and singing, cleft his tomb,
And with him risen and regent in death's room
All day thy choral pulses rang full choir.

O heart whose beating blood was running song,
O sole thing sweeter than thine own songs were,
Help us for thy free love's sake to be free,
True for thy truth's sake, for thy strength's sake strong,
Till very liberty made clean and fair
The nursing earth as the sepulchral sea.

A Ballad of François Villon

PRINCE OF ALL BALLAD-MAKERS

BIRD of the bitter gray golden morn,
Scarce risen upon the dusk of dolorous years,
First of us all and sweetest singer born,
Whose far shrill note the world of new men hears
Cleave the cold shuddering shade as twilight clears:
When song new-born put off the old world's attire
And felt its tune on her changed lips expire,
Writ foremost on the roll of them that came
Fresh girt for service of the latter lyre,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Alas, the joy, the sorrow, and the scorn,
That clothed thy life with hopes and sins and fears,
And gave thee stones for bread and tares for corn,
And plume-plucked gaol-birds for thy starveling peers,
Till death clipt close their flight with shameful shears;
Till shifts came short and loves were hard to hire,
When lilt of song nor twitch of twangling wire
Could buy thee bread or kisses; when light fame
Spurned like a ball and haled through brake and briar,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name!

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!
Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!
Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,
That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers,
Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears!
What far delight has cooled the fierce desire
That, like some ravenous bird, was strong to tire
On that frail flesh and soul consumed with flame,
But left more sweet than roses to respire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name?

ENVOI

Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire,
A harlot was thy nurse, a God thy sire:
Shame soiled thy song, and song assoiled thy shame.
But from thy feet now death has washed the mire,
Love reads out first at head of all our quire,
Villon, our sad bad glad mad brother's name.

*On the Monument Erected to Mazzini
at Genoa*

This lyric homage is paid to that lofty soul known to the world as Joseph Mazzini. He was a son of Italy—now he is a son of humanity. Intellectually he was a giant, as his literary and political essays make clear. But he was even greater as an inspired and inspiring prophet of “a juster and nobler social order for mankind.” His life was consecrated to ideals and to energetic action in their behalf. He was mystic and martyr, saint and hero. What power from the Unseen supported him on his long, lonely and terrible apostolate?

ITALIA, mother of the souls of men,
Mother divine
Of all that served thee best with sword or pen,
All sons of thine,

Thou knowest that here the likeness of the best
Before thee stands—
The head most high, the heart found faithfulest,
The purest hands.

Above the fume and foam of time that flits,
The soul, we know,
Now sits on high where Alighieri sits
With Angelo.

Nor his own heavenly tongue hath heavenly speech
Enough to say
What this man was, whose praise no thought may reach,
No words can weigh.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Since man's first mother brought to mortal birth
Her first-born son,
Such grace befell not ever man on earth
As crowns this One.

Of God nor man was ever this thing said:
That he could give
Life back to her who gave him, that his dead
Mother might live.

But this man found his mother dead and slain,
With fast-sealed eyes,
And bade the dead rise up and live again,
And she did rise:

And all the world was bright with her through him:
But dark with strife,
Like heaven's own sun that storming clouds bedim,
Was all his life.

Life and the clouds are vanished; hate and fear
Have had their span
Of time to hurt and are not: He is here,
The sunlike man.

City superb, that hadst Columbus first
For sovereign son,
Be prouder that thy breast hath later nursed
This mightier One.

Glory be his for ever, while his land
Lives and is free,
As with controlling breath and sovereign hand
He bade her be.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

Earth shows to heaven the names by thousands told
That crown her fame,
But highest of all that heaven and earth behold,
Mazzini's name.

*On the Deaths of Thomas Carlyle and
George Eliot*

TWO souls diverse out of our human sight
Pass, followed one with love and each with
wonder:

The stormy sophist with his mouth of thunder,
Clothed with loud words and mantled in the might
Of darkness and magnificence of night;

And one whose eye could smite the night in sunder,
Searching if light or no light were thereunder,
And found in love of loving-kindness light.

Duty divine and Thought with eyes of fire
Still following Righteousness with deep desire
Shone sole and stern before her and above—
Sure stars and sole to steer by; but more sweet
Shone lower the loveliest lamp for earthly feet—
The light of little children, and their love.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

William Shakespeare

NOT if men's tongues and angels' all in one
Spake, might the word be said that might speak
Thee.

Streams, winds, woods, flowers, fields, mountains, yea,
the sea,

What power is in them all to praise the sun?

His praise is this—he can be praised of none.

Man, woman, child, praise God for him; but he

Exults not to be worshipped, but to be.

He is; and, being, beholds his work well done.

All joy, all glory, all sorrow, all strength, all mirth,
Are his: without him, day were night on earth.

Time knows not his from time's own period.

All lutes, all harps, all viols, all flutes, all lyres,

Fall dumb before him ere one string suspires.

All stars are angels; but the sun is God.

Children

OF such is the kingdom of heaven.
No glory that ever was shed
From the crowning star of the seven
That crown the north world's head,

No word that ever was spoken

Of human or godlike tongue,

Gave ever such godlike token

Since human harps were strung.

ALGERNON CHARLES SWINBURNE

No sign that ever was given
To faithful or faithless eyes
Showed ever beyond clouds riven
So clear a Paradise.

Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
And blood have defiled each creed:
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
It must be heaven indeed.

Étude Réaliste

I

A BABY'S feet, like sea-shells pink,
Might tempt, should Heaven see meet,
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat,
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
Gleam half so heavenly sweet
As shine on life's untrodden brink
A baby's feet.

II

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furred,
 Whence yet no leaf expands,
Ope if you touch, though close upcurled,
 A baby's hands.

Then, even as warriors grip their brands
 When battle's bolt is hurled,
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled
 Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world—
 A baby's hands.

III

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,
 Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
 A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
 And sleep flows out and in,
Sees perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
 Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within
 A baby's eyes.

DAVID GRAY

SCOTLAND, 1838—1861

IT was toward the close of his life that, broken in health as a result of his struggles to pursue a literary career in London, this Scotch poet wrote his appealing autobiographical sonnets, *In the Shadows*. His only other notable work was an idyllic poem, *The Luggie*.

In the Shadows

I

WHOM the gods love die young." The thought
is old;

And yet it soothed the sweet Athenian mind.

I take it with all pleasure, overbold,

Perhaps, yet to its virtue much inclined

By an inherent love for what is fair.

This is the utter poetry of woe—

That the bright-flashing gods should cure despair

By love, and make youth precious here below.

I die, being young; and, dying, could become

A pagan, with the tender Grecian trust.

Let Death, the fell anatomy, benumb

The hand that writes, and fill my mouth with dust;

Chant no funereal theme, but, with a choral

Hymn, O ye mourners! hail immortal youth auroral!

DAVID GRAY

II

O many a time with Ovid have I borne
My father's vain, yet well-meant reprimand,
To leave the sweet-aired, clover-purpled land
Of rhyme—its Lares loftily forlorn,
With all their pure humanities unworn—
To batten on the bare Theologies!
To quench a glory lighted at the skies,
Fed on one essence with the silver morn,
Were of all blasphemies the most insane.
So, deeper given to the delicious spell,
I clung to thee, heart-soothing Poesy!
Now on a sick-bed racked with arrowy pain,
I lift white hands of gratitude, and cry,
Spirit of God in Milton! was it well?

AUSTIN DOBSON

ENGLAND, 1840—1921

FROM 1856 to 1901 Austin Dobson held an official position in the London Board of Trade, finding time to produce many volumes of verse written mainly in French forms, such as the triolet, rondeau and ballade. All are marked by cleverness, ease and meticulous finish. The atmosphere of the 18th century hangs over his most characteristic work. In both artistry and feeling, he stands at the head of the makers of society verse.

Triolet

I INTENDED an Ode,
And it turned to a Sonnet.
It began *à la mode*,
I intended an Ode;
But Rose crossed the road
In her latest new bonnet;
I intended an Ode;
And it turned to a Sonnet.

A Fancy from Fontenelle

THE Rose in the garden slipped her bud,
And she laughed in the pride of her youthful blood,
As she thought of the Gardener standing by—
“He is old—so old! And he soon must die!”

AUSTIN DOBSON

The full Rose waxed in the warm June air,
And she spread and spread till her heart lay bare;
And she laughed once more as she heard his tread—
“He is older now! He will soon be dead!”

But the breeze of the morning blew and found
That the leaves of the blown rose strewed the ground;
And he came at noon, that Gardener old,
And he raked them softly under the mold.

*And I wove the thing to a random rhyme,
For the Rose is Beauty, the Gardener Time.*

A Song of the Four Seasons

WHEN Spring comes laughing
By vale and hill,
By wind-flower walking
And daffodil—
Sing stars of morning,
Sing morning skies,
Sing blue of speedwell—
And my Love's eyes.

When comes the Summer,
Full-leaved and strong,
And gay birds gossip
The orchard long—
Sing hid, sweet honey
That no bee sips;
Sing red, red roses—
And my Love's lips.

When Autumn scatters
 The leaves again,
 And piled sheaves bury
 The broad-wheeled wain—
 Sing flutes of harvest
 Where men rejoice;
 Sing rounds of reapers—
 And my Love's voice.

But when comes Winter
 With hail and storm,
 And red fire roaring
 And ingle warm—
 Sing first sad going
 Of friends that part;
 Then sing glad meeting—
 And my Love's heart.

Good-Night, Babette!

SCENE—*A small neat Room. In a high Voltaire
 Chair sits a white haired old Gentleman.*

Monsieur Vieubois.

Babette.

M. Vieuxbois (*turning querulously*).

Day of my life! Where can she get?

Babette! I say! Babette!—Babette!

Babette (*entering hurriedly*).

Coming, M'sieu'! If M'sieu' speaks

So loud, he won't be well for weeks!

AUSTIN DOBSON

M. Vieuxbois.

Where have you been?

Babette.

Why M'sieu knows;

April! . . . Ville-d'Avray! . . . Ma'am'selle Rose!

M. Vieuxbois.

Ah! I am old—and I forget.

Was the place growing green, Babette?

Babette.

But of a greeness—yes, M'sieu'!

And then the sky so blue—so blue!

And when I dropped my immortelle,

How the birds sang!

(Lifting her apron to her eyes.)

This poor Ma'am'selle!

M. Vieuxbois.

You're a good girl, Babette, but she—

She was an Angel, verily.

Sometimes I think I see her yet

Stand smiling by cabinet;

And once, I know, she peeped and laughed

Betwixt the curtains . . .

Where's the draught?

(She gives him a cup.)

Now I shall sleep, I think, Babette;

Sing me your Norman *chansonnette*.

AUSTIN DOBSON

Babette (*sings*).

*"Once at the Angelus
(Ere I was dead)
Angels all glorious
Came to my Bed
Angels in blue and white
Crowned on the Head."*

M. Vieuxbois (*drowsily*).

"She was an Angel" . . . "Once she laughed" . . .
What, was I dreaming?

Where's the draught!

Babette (*showing the empty cup*).

The draught, M'sieu'?

M. Vieuxbois.

How I forget!

I am so old! But sing, Babette!

Babette (*sings*)

*"One was the Friend I left
Stark in the Snow,
One was the Wife that died
Long—long ago;
One was the Love I lost . . .
How could she know?"*

M. Vieuxbois (*murmuring*).

Ah, Paul! . . . old Paul! . . . Eulalie too!
And Rose . . . And Oh! "the sky so blue"

AUSTIN DOBSON

Babette (*sings*)

"One had my Mother's eyes,
Wistful and mild:

One had my Father's face;

One was a Child:

All of them bent to me—

Bent down and smiled!"

(*He is asleep!*)

M. Vieuxbois (*almost inaudibly*).

"How I forget!"

"I am so old! . . . Good-night, Babette!"

Ars Vivtrix

IMITATED FROM THÉOPHILE GAUTIER

YES; when the ways oppose—
When the hard means rebel,
Fairer the work out-grows—
More potent far the spell.

O Poet, then forbear
The loosely sandalled verse,
Choose rather thou to wear
The buskin—strait and terse;

Leave to the tyro's hand
The limp and shapeless style;
See that thy form demand
The labor of the file.

AUSTIN DOBSON

Sculptor, do thou discard
The yielding clay—consign
To Paros marble hard
The beauty of thy line;

Model thy Satyr's face
For bronze of Syracuse;
In the veined agate trace
The profile of thy Muse.

PAINTER that still must mix
But transient tints anew,
Thou in the furnace fix
The firm enamel's hue;

Let the smooth tile receive
Thy dove-drawn Erycine;
Thy Sirens blue at eve
Coiled in a wash of wine.

All passes. ART alone
Enduring stays to us:
The Bust out-lasts the throne—
The Coin, Tiberius;

Even the gods must go;
Only the lofty Rhyme
Not countless years o'erthrow—
Not long array of time.

Paint, chisel, then, or write;
But, that the work surpass,
With the hard fashion fight—
With the resisting mass.

AUSTIN DOBSON

In After Days

RONDEAU

IN after days when grasses high
O'er-top the stone where I shall lie,
Though ill or well the world adjust
My slender claim to honored dust,
I shall not question nor reply.

I shall not see the morning sky;
I shall not hear the night-wind sigh;
I shall be mute, as all men must
In after days!

But yet, now living, fain were I
That some one then should testify,
Saying—"He held his pen in trust
To Art, not serving shame or lust."
Will none?—Then let my memory die
In after days!

WILFRID SCAWEN BLUNT

ENGLAND, 1840—1922

Laughter and Death

THERE is no laughter in the natural world
Of beast or fish or bird, though no sad doubt
Of their futurity to them unfurled
Has dared to check the mirth-compelling shout.
The lion roars his solemn thunder out
To the sleeping woods. The eagle screams her cry.
Even the lark must strain a serious throat
To hurl his blest defiance at the sky.

WILFRED SCAWEN BLUNT

Fear, anger, jealousy have found a voice.

Love's pain or rapture the brute bosoms swell.
Nature has symbols for her nobler joys,

Her nobler sorrows. Who had dared foretell
That only man, by some sad mockery
Should learn to laugh who learns that he must die?

The Sublime

A DOUBLE SONNET

I.

TO stand upon a windy pinnacle,
Beneath the infinite blue of the blue noon,
And underfoot a valley terrible
As that dim gulf, where sense and being swoon
When the soul parts; a giant valley strewn
With giant rocks; asleep, and vast, and still,
And far away. The torrent, which has hewn
His pathway through the entrails of the hill,
Now crawls along the bottom and anon
Lifts up his voice, a muffled tremulous roar
Borne on the wind an instant, and then gone
Back to the caverns of the middle air;
A voice as of a nation overthrown
With beat of drums, when hosts have marched to war.

WILFRED SCAWEN BLUNT

II.

Clutching the brink with hands and feet and knees,
With trembling heart, and eyes grown strangely dim,
A part thyself and parcel of the frieze
Of that colossal temple raised to Time,
To gaze on horror, till, as in a crime,
Thou and the rocks become accomplices.
There is no voice, no life, 'twixt thee and them.
No life! Yet, look, far down upon the breeze
Something has passed across the bosom bare
Of the red rocks, a leaf, a shape, a shade.
A living shadow! ay, above thee there
Are others watching.—This is the sublime:
To be alone, with eagles in the air.

STANYAN BIGG

ENGLAND, 19th CENTURY

WE come now to a discovery, to a poet of strange chaotic power, an English poet of the middle of the nineteenth century, one utterly forgotten by the world, and even by the anthologists. There are imperfections in his lines, as in the lines of nearly all poets; and yet his name should not be allowed to die utterly. George Gilfillan says: "Stanyan Bigg has an original genius, a prolific fancy * * * a noble rush of thought and language, a varied and bold imagery. His long poem, *Night and the Soul*, is just a heap of fine and beautiful things, with no dramatic skill in dialogue"—I quote a few scattered passages.

STANYAN BIGG

From "Night and the Soul"

I

I SHOULD be wretched as a cold lone house,
Standing a mark upon a northern moor,
Eaves-deep in snow, surrounded by black pools,
Pelted by winter, ever anger-pale,
To lose you, having tasted of such bliss,
Such sweet companionship, such holy joy.
'Twere as if earth should be flung back again,
All singing as she is, and crowned with flowers,
Into the reeking cycles of her past:
Instead of valleys, sedgy swamps, and fens,
With grim, unwieldly reptiles trailing through,
And in the place of singing, bellowings
And the wild roar of monsters on the hills.

II

Doth Night not look now just as if she knew
All that hath been, and all that is to come?
With one of her all-prescient glances turned
Toward those kindred depths which slept for aye—
The sable robe which God threw round himself,
And where, pavilioned in glooms, He dwelt
In brooding night for ages, perfecting
The glorious dream of past eternities,
The fabric of creation, running adown
The long time-avenues, and gazing out
Into those blanks which slept before time was;
And with another searching glance, turned up
Toward unknown futurities—the book
Of unborn wonders—till she hath perused

STANYAN BIGG

The chapter of its doom: and with an eye
Made vague by the dim vastness of its vision,
Watching unmoved the fall of burning worlds,
Rolling along the steep sides of the Infinite,
All ripe, like apples dropping from their stems;
Till the wide fields of space, like orchards stripped,
Have yielded up their treasures to the garner,
And the last star hath fallen from the crown
Of the high heavens into utter night,
Like a bright moment swallowed up and lost
In hours of after-anguish: and all things
Are as they were in the beginning, ere
The mighty pageant trailed its golden skirts
Along the glittering pathway of its God,
Save that the spacious halls of Heaven are filled
With countless multitudes of finite souls,
With germ-like infinite capacities,
As if to prove all had not been a dream.
'Tis this that Night seems always thinking of;
Linking the void past to the future void.

III

O thought! what art thou but a fluttering leaf
Shed from the garden of eternity?
The robe in which the soul invests itself
To join the countless myriads of the skies.
The diamond apex of the Infinite—
A ray of the great halo round God's head—
The consummation and the source of all,
In which all cluster, and all constellate,
Grouping like glories round the purpled west
When the sun is low. For what are stars
But God's thoughts indurate—the burning words
That rolled forth blazing from His mighty lips,

STANYAN BIGG

When He spake to the breathless infinite,
And shook the wondrous sleeper from her dream?

IV

Last night I dreamed the universe was mad,
And that the sun its Cyclopean eye
Rolled glaring like a maniac's in the heavens;
And moons and comets, linked together, screamed
Like bands of witches at their carnivals,
And streamed like wandering hell along the sky;
And that the awful stars, through the red light,
Glinted at one another wickedly,
Throbbing and chilling with intensest hate,
While through the whole a nameless horror ran;
And worlds dropped from their place in the shuddering,
Like leaves of Autumn, when a mighty wind
Makes the trees shiver through their thickest robes.
Great spheres cracked in the midst, and belched out
flame,
And sputtering fires went crackling over heaven;
And space yawned blazing stars; and Time shrieked
out,
That hungry fire was eating everything!
And scorched fiends, down in the nether hell,
Cried out, "The universe is mad—is mad!"
And the great thing in its convulsions flung
System on system, till the caldron boiled
(Space was the caldron, and all hell the fire)
And every giant limb of the universe
Dilated and collapsed, till it grew wan,
Beating like panting fire—and I awoke.
'Twas not all dream; such is the world to me.

THOMAS HARDY

ENGLAND, 1840—1918

THE world knows Hardy as the writer of powerful yet somber novels; but he is more recently known as a writer of austere poems—some of them unforgettable. His poetic drama, *The Dynasts*, is a pageant of the wars of Napoleon. It is an immense massing—a colossal and crushing expression—of the philosophy of fatalism as the central fact in the movement of life. Hardy is in the great tradition, not of the romantic nor of any specific school, but of poetry *per se*, in that he gives us the causes of emotion rather than his individual emotions, and succeeds in making us share his emotional reactions. In his poetry one feels a shyness, almost an unwillingness of emotion, which causes him to avoid the obvious beauties of verse, instinctively rather than deliberately. He has looked so deep into life that he sees the naked skeleton behind it all. Yet he sees the horror with a heart all tenderness. A tear falls ever into his tragic song.

I take from the Hardy essay of John Cowper Powys these convincing comments: "It is the history of the human race itself that holds Mr. Hardy with a mesmeric spell, as century after century it unrolls its acts and scenes, under the indifferent stars. . . . With something of a goblin-like alertness, he skips here and there, watching those strange scene-shifters at their work. The dual stops of his country pipe are cut from the same reed. With the one, he challenges the immortals on behalf of humanity; with the other, he plays such a shrewd Priapian tune that all the satyrs dance. . . . The truth is, there are two spirits in Mr. Hardy—one infinitely sorrowful and tender; the other whimsical, elfish, and malign. . . . The same abnormal sensitiveness that makes him pity the victims of

THOMAS HARDY

destiny, makes him also not unaware of what may be sweet to the palate of the gods in such 'merry jests.'

"His ultimate thought is that the universe is blind and unconscious—that it knows not what it does. . . . Mr. Hardy is indignant enough over the ridiculous conventions of society; but he knows that, at bottom, what we suffer from is 'the dust out of which we are made'—the eternal illusion and disillusion which must drive us on and 'take us off' until the planet's last hour."

An Ancient to Ancients

WHERE once we danced, where once we sang,
Gentlemen,
The floors are sunken, cobwebs hang,
And cracks creep; worms have fed upon
The doors. Yea, brighter times were then
Than now, with harps and tabrets gone,
Gentlemen.

Where once we rowed, where once we sailed,
Gentlemen,
And damsels took the tiller, veiled
Against too strong a stare (God wot
Their fancy . . . then or any when!)
Upon that shore we are clean forgot,
Gentlemen.

We have lost somewhat afar and near,
Gentlemen,
The thinning of our ranks each year
Affords a hint we are nigh undone,
That we shall not be ever again
The marked of many, loved of one,
Gentlemen.

THOMAS HARDY

In dance the polka met our wish,
Gentlemen,
The paced quadrille, the spry schottische,
"Sir Roger"; and in opera spheres
The "Girl," the famed "Bohemian,"
And "Trovatore," held the ears,
Gentlemen.

This seasons paintings do not please,
Gentlemen,
Like Etty, Mulready, Maclise;
Throbbing romance has waned and wanned:
No wizard wields the witching pen
Of Bulwer, Scott, Dumas and Sand,
Gentlemen.

The bower we shrined to Tennyson,
Gentlemen,
Is roof-wrecked; there damps drip upon
Sagged seats, the creeper-nails are rust:
The spider is sole denizen;
Even she who read those rhymes is dust,
Gentlemen.

We who met sunrise sanguine-souled,
Gentlemen,
Are getting weary. We are old;
These younger press; we feel our rout
Is imminent to Haides' den,
That evening shades are stretching out,
Gentlemen.

And yet, though ours be faltering frames,
Gentlemen,

THOMAS HARDY

So were some others' history names,
Who trod their track, light-stepped and fast
As these youth, and not alien
From enterprise, to their long last,
Gentlemen.

Sophocles, Plato, Socrates,
Gentlemen,
Pythagoras, Thucydides,
Herodotus, and Homer, yea,
Clement, Augustine, Origen,
Burnt brightlier towards their setting-day,
Gentlemen.

And you, red-lipped and smoothed-browed, list,
Gentlemen:
Much is there waits you we have missed;
Much lore we leave you worth the knowing;
Much, much has lain outside our ken.
Nay, rush not: time serves, we are going,
Gentlemen.

The Blinded Bird

*Not long ago captive birds were blinded to encourage
them to sing.*

SO zestfully canst thou sing?
And all this indignity,
With God's consent, on thee!
Blinded ere yet a-wing
By the red-hot needle thou,
I stand and wonder how
So zestfully thou canst sing!

THOMAS HARDY

Resenting not such wrong,
Thy grievous pain forgot,
Eternal dark thy lot,
Groping thy whole life long,
After that stab of fire;
Enjailed in pitiless wire;
Resenting not such wrong!

Who hath charity? This bird.
Who suffereth long and is kind,
Is not provoked, though blind
And alive ensepulchred?
Who hopeth, endureth all things?
Who thinketh no evil, but sings?
Who is divine? This bird.

In the Moonlight

A LONELY workman, standing there
In a dream, why do you stare and stare
At her grave, as no other grave there were?

"If your great gaunt eyes so importune
Her soul by the shine of this corpse-cold moon,
Maybe you'll raise her phantom soon!"

"Why, fool, it is what I would rather see
Than all the living folk there be!
But alas, there is no such joy for me!"

"Ah—she was one you loved, no doubt,
Through good and evil, through rain and drought,
And when she passed, all your sun went out?"

THOMAS HARDY

"Nay: she was the woman I did not love,
Whom all the others were ranked above,
Whom during her life I thought nothing of."

In Time of "The Breaking of Nations"

ONLY a man harrowing clods
In a slow silent walk
With an old horse that stumbles and nods
Half asleep as they stalk.

Only thin smoke without flame
From the heaps of couch-grass;
Yet this will go onward the same
Though Dynasties pass.

Yonder a maid and her wight
Come whispering by:
War's annals will cloud into night
Ere their story die.¹

¹ I wrote, long ago, the following little poem having a singular similarity to the foregoing. I quote it here, since readers may have an interest in seeing how two persons—independently—may chance to treat the same idea.—E. M.

A Moment Immortal

In the falling twilight, soft and still,
A plowman trudges over the hill;
While down the glory in the west
A crane swings swiftly to her nest.
The trees upon the fading height
Are listening for the coming night:
Two lovers are straying down the walk,
Their heads bent close in tender talk.

This is the picture: it will stay
As long as there is night and day.

THOMAS HARDY

She Hears the Storm

THERE was a time in former years—
While my roof-tree was his—
When I should have been distressed by fears
At such a night as this.

I should have murmured anxiously,
"The pricking rain strikes cold:
His road is bare of hedge or tree,
And he is getting old."

But now the fitful chimney-roar,
The drone of Thorncombe trees,
The Froom in flood upon the moor,
The mud of Mellstock Leaze,

The candle slanting sooty wicked,
The thuds upon the thatch,
The eaves-drops on the window flicked,
The clacking garden-hatch,

And what they mean to wayfarers,
I scarcely heed or mind:
He has won that storm-tight roof of hers
Which Earth grants all her kind.

Four Footprints

HERE are the tracks upon the sand
Where stood last evening she and I—
Pressed heart to heart and hand to hand:
The morning sun has baked them dry.

THOMAS HARDY

I kissed her wet face, wet with rain,
For arid grief had burnt up tears;
While reached us as in sleeping pain
The distant gurgling of the weirs.

"I have married him—yes: feel that ring:
'Tis a week ago that he put it on.
A dutiful daughter does this thing,
And resignation succeeds anon!

"But that I, body and soul, was yours
Ere he'd possession, he'll never know.
He's a confident man. 'The husband scores,'
He says, 'in the long run.' . . . Now, Dear, go!"

I went. And today I pass the spot:
It is only a smart the more to endure.
And she whom I held is as if she were not,
For they have resumed their honeymoon tour.

The Man He Killed

FROM "THE DYNASTS"

HAD he and I but met
By some old ancient inn,
We should have sat us down to wet
Right many a nipperkin!

"But ranged as infantry,
And staring face to face,
I shot at him as he at me,
And killed him in his place.

THOMAS HARDY

"I shot him dead because—
Because he was my foe,
Just so; my foe of course he was;
That's clear enough; although

"He thought he'd 'list, perhaps,
Off-hand like—just as I—
Was out of work—had sold his traps—
No other reason why.

"Yes; quaint and curious war is!
You shoot a fellow down
You'd treat, if met where any bar is,
Or help to half-a-crown."

The Carrier

THERE'S a seat, I see, still empty?"
Cried the hailer from the road:
"No there is not!" said the carrier,
Quickening his horse and load.

"They say you are in the grave, Jane;
But still you ride with me!"
And he looked towards the vacant space
He had kept beside his knee.

And the passengers murmured: "'Tis where his wife
In journeys to and fro
Used always to sit; but nobody does
Since those long years ago."

THOMAS HARDY

Rumble-mumble went the van
Past Sidwell Church and wall,
Till Exon Towers were out of scan,
And night lay over all.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

SCOTLAND, 1841—1901

BESIDES writing poetry and several novels of distinction, Robert Buchanan is remembered for his attack upon Dante Gabriel Rossetti in an essay entitled *The Fleshly School of Poetry*, which drew from that poet a famous letter on *The Stealthy School of Criticism*, and in 1872 a scathing pamphlet from Swinburne, *Under the Microscope*. It should be added that in later life Buchanan regretted his action, and was manly enough to print a repudiation of his early words.

The Ballad of Judas Iscariot

'T WAS the body of Judas Iscariot
Lay in the Field of Blood;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Beside the body stood.

Black was the earth by night,
And black was the sky;
Black, black were the broken clouds,
Though the red Moon went by.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
Strangled and dead lay there;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Looked on it in despair.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

The breath of the World came and went
Like a sick man's in rest;
Drop by drop on the World's eyes
The dews fell cool and blest.

Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
Did make a gentle moan—
"I will bury underneath the ground
My flesh and blood and bone.

"The stones of the field are sharp as steel,
And hard and bold, God wot;
And I must bear my body hence
Until I find a spot!"

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
So grim, and gaunt, and gray,
Raised the body of Judas Iscariot,
And carried it away.

And as he bare it from the field
Its touch was cold as ice,
And the ivory teeth within the jaw
Rattled aloud, like dice.

As the soul of Judas Iscariot
Carried its load with pain,
The Eye of Heaven, like a lantern's eye,
Opened and shut again.

Half he walked, and half he seemed
Lifted on the cold wind;
He did not turn, for chilly hands
Were pushing from behind.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

The first place that he came unto
It was the open wold,
And underneath were prickly whins,
And a wind that blew so cold.

The next place that he came unto
It was a stagnant pool,
And when he threw the body in
It floated light as wool.

He drew the body on his back,
And it was dripping chill,
And the next place that he came unto
Was a Cross upon a hill.

A Cross upon the windy hill,
And a Cross on either side,
Three skeletons that swing thereon,
Who had been crucified.

And on the middle cross-bar sat
A white Dove slumbering;
Dim it sat in the dim light,
With its head beneath its wing.

And underneath the middle Cross
A grave yawned wide and vast,
But the soul of Judas Iscariot
Shivered, and glided past.

The fourth place that he came unto
It was the Brig of Dread,
And the great torrents rushing down
Were deep, and swift, and red.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

He dared not fling the body in
For fear of faces dim,
And arms were waved in the wild water
To thrust it back to him.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Turned from the Brig of Dread,
And the dreadful foam of the wild water
Had splashed the body red.

For days and nights he wandered on
Upon an open plain,
And the days went by like blinding mist,
And the nights like rushing rain.

For days and nights he wandered on,
All through the Wood of Woe;
And the nights went by like moaning wind,
And the days like drifting snow.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Came with a weary face—
Alone, alone, and all alone,
Alone in a lonely place!

He wandered east, he wandered west,
And heard no human sound;
For months and years, in grief and tears,
He wandered round and round.

For months and years, in grief and tears,
He walked the silent night;
Then the soul of Judas Iscariot
Perceived a far-off light.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

A far-off light across the waste,
As dim as dim might be,
That came and went like a lighthouse gleam
On a black night at sea.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Crawled to the distant gleam;
And the rain came down, and the rain was blown
Against him with a scream.

For days and nights he wandered on,
Pushed on by hands behind
And the days went by like black, black rain,
And the nights like rushing wind.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot,
Strange, and sad, and tall,
Stood all alone at dead of night
Before a lighted hall.

And the wold was white with snow,
And his foot-marks black and damp,
And the ghost of the silver Moon arose,
Holding her yellow lamp.

And the icicles were on the eaves,
And the walls were deep with white,
And the shadows of the guests within
Passed on the window light.

The shadows of the wedding guests
Did strangers come and go,
And the body of Judas Iscariot
Lay stretched along the snow.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

The body of Judas Iscariot
Lay stretched along the snow;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Ran swiftly to and fro.

To and fro, and up and down,
He ran so swiftly there,
As round and round the frozen Pole
Glideth the lean white bear.

'Twas the Bridegroom sat at the table-head,
And the lights burned bright and clear—
"Oh, who is that?" the Bridegroom said,
"Whose weary feet I hear?"

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,
And answered soft and slow,
"It is a wolf runs up and down
With a black track in the snow."

The Bridegroom in his robe of white
Sat at the table-head—
"Oh, who is that who moans without?"
The blessèd Bridegroom said.

'Twas one looked from the lighted hall,
And answered fierce and low,
"'Tis the soul of Judas Iscariot
Gliding to and fro."

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Did hush itself and stand,
And saw the Bridegroom at the door
With a light in his hand.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
And he was clad in white,
And far within the Lord's Supper
Was spread so long and bright.

The Bridegroom shaded his eyes and looked,
And his face was bright to see—
"What dost thou here at the Lord's Supper
With thy body's sins?" said he.

'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Stood black, and sad, and bare—
"I have wandered many nights and days;
There is no light elsewhere."

'Twas the wedding guests cried out within,
And their eyes were fierce and bright—
"Scourge the soul of Judas Iscariot
Away into the night!"

The Bridegroom stood in the open door,
And he waved hands still and slow,
And the third time that he waved his hands
The air was thick with snow.

And of every flake of falling snow,
Before it touched the ground,
There came a dove, and a thousand doves
Made sweet sound.

'Twas the body of Judas Iscariot
Floated away full fleet,
And the wings of the doves that bare it off
Were like its winding-sheet.

ROBERT BUCHANAN

'Twas the Bridegroom stood at the open door,
And beckoned, smiling sweet;
'Twas the soul of Judas Iscariot
Stole in, and fell at his feet.

"The Holy Supper is spread within,
And the many candles shine,
And I have waited long for thee,
Before I poured the wine!"

The supper wine is poured at last,
The lights burn bright and fair,
Iscariot washes the Bridegroom's feet,
And dries them with his hair.

F. W. H. MYERS
ENGLAND, 1843—1901

The Inner Light

LO, if some pen should write upon your rafter
MENE and MENE in the folds of flame,
Think you could any memories thereafter
Wholly retrace the couplet as it came?

Lo, if some strange, intelligible thunder
Sang to the earth the secret of a star,
Scarce could ye catch, for terror and for wonder,
Shreds of the story that was pealed so far.

Scarcely I catch the words of His revealing,
Hardly I hear Him, dimly understand,
Only the Power that is within me pealing
Lives on my lips and beckons to my hand.

F. W. H. MYERS

Whoso has felt the Spirit of the Highest
Cannot confound nor doubt Him nor deny:
Yea, with one voice, O world, though thou deniest,
Stand thou on that side, for on this am I.

Rather the earth shall doubt when her retrieving
Pours in the rain and rushes from the sod,
Rather than he for whom the great conceiving
Stirs in his soul to quicken into God.

Ay, though thou then shouldst strike from him his glory,
Blind and tormented, maddened and alone,
Even on the cross would he maintain his story,
Yes, and in hell would whisper, I have known.

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

ENGLAND, 1844—1881

THIS poet was associated with Dante Gabriel Rossetti and the other pre-Raphaelites. There is a certain remoteness in his poetry which has limited its popularity, yet O'Shaughnessy has a "haunting music" all his own. Edmund Gosse says that O'Shaughnessy has a small residuum of exquisite poetry, full of odor and melody—says also that his poetry has a habit of "etherealizing human feeling and of looking upon mundane emotion as the broken echo of a subtle and supernal passion." *The Music Makers* is his masterpiece; and Louis Untermeyer observes that "because of its perfect blending of music and message, it is one of the immortal classics of our verse."

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

From "The Music-Makers"

WE are the music-makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;
World-losers and world-forsakers,
On whom the pale moon gleams:
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems.

With wonderful deathless ditties
We build up the world's great cities,
And out of a fabulous story
We fashion an empire's glory:
One man with a dream, at pleasure,
Shall go forth and conquer a crown;
And three with a new song's measure
Can trample an empire down.

We, in the ages lying
In the buried past of the earth,
Built Nineveh with our sighing,
And Babel itself with our mirth;
And o'erthrew them with prophesying
To the old of the new world's worth;
For each age is a dream that is dying,
Or one that is coming to birth.

ARTHUR O'SHAUGHNESSY

Song

I MADE another garden, yea,
For my new love:
I left the dead rose where it lay,
And set the new above.
Why did the summer not begin?
Why did my heart not haste?
My old love came and walked therein,
And laid the garden waste.

She entered with her weary smile,
Just as of old:
She looked around a little while,
And shivered at the cold.
Her passing touch was death to all,
Her passing look a blight:
She made the white rose-petals fall,
And turned the red rose white.

Her pale robe clinging to the grass,
Seemed like a snake
That bit the grass and ground, alas!
And a sad trail did make.
She went up slowly to the gate;
And there, just as of yore,
She turned back at the last to wait,
And say farewell once more.

ANDREW LANG

SCOTLAND, 1844—1912

LANG was not primarily a poet, and yet he was a writer of undoubted genius and amazing versatility. A large number of his poems are the direct outcome of his reading and of his prose labors: consult, for example, his *Ballads and Lyrics of Old France*, his *Ballades in Blue China* and his *Grass of Parnassus*. The poems in which he recast thoughts suggested by Homer and Herodotus, such as the fine *Odyssey* sonnet, fall into this category. Lang had a deep sense of national duty, a positive horror of any political faltering or paltering where the national honor is at stake. Certain of his poems give an almost fierce expression to this feeling, but most of his verses are lighter in theme and in touch.

The Odyssey

Here is an excellent sonnet, but it owes its chief distinction to the resounding energy of its last line. This last-line power characterizes most of the famous sonnets. So, young student, if you undertake to write in this difficult form, beware of a weak ending. A sonnet should mount with a crescendo movement to its starry summit.

AS one that for a weary space has lain
Lulled by the song of Circe and her wine
In gardens near the pale of Proserpine,
Where that Ææan isle forgets the main,
And only the low lutes of love complain,
And only shadows of wan lovers pine—
As such an one were glad to know the brine

ANDREW LANG

Salt on his lips, and the large air again—
So gladly from the songs of modern speech
Men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free
Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,
And through the music of the languid hours
They hear like Ocean on a western beach
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

Lost Love

WHO wins his Love shall lose her,
Who loses her shall gain,
For still the spirit woos her,
A soul without a stain;
And Memory still pursues her
With longings not in vain!

He loses her who gains her,
Who watches day by day
The dust of time that stains her,
The griefs that leave her gray,
The flesh that yet enchains her
Whose grace hath passed away!

Oh, happier he who gains not
The Love some seem to gain:
The joy that custom stains not
Shall still with him remain,
The loveliness that wanes not,
The Love that ne'er can wane.

ANDREW LANG

In dreams she grows not older
The lands of Dream among,
Though all the world wax colder,
Though all the songs be sung,
In dreams doth he behold her
Still fair and kind and young.

Ballade of Blue China

THERE'S a joy without canker or cark,
There's a pleasure eternally new,
'Tis to gloat on the glaze and the mark
Of china that's ancient and blue:
Unchipped all the centuries through
It has passed, since the chime of it rang,
And they fashioned it, figure and hue,
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

These dragons (their tails, you remark,
Into bunches of gillyflowers grew)
When Noah came out of the ark,
Did these lie in wait for his crew?
They snorted, they snapped and they slew,
They were mighty of fin and of fang,
And their portraits Celestial drew
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

Here's a pot with a cot in a park,
In a park where the peach-blossoms blew,
Where the lovers eloped in the dark,
Lived, died, and were changed into two
Bright birds that eternally flew

ANDREW LANG

Through the boughs of the may, as they sang:
'Tis a tale was undoubtedly true
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

ENVOY

Come, snarl at my ecstasies, do,
Kind critic; your "tongue has a tang,"
But—a sage never heeded a shrew
In the reign of the Emperor Hwang.

ROBERT BRIDGES

ENGLAND, 1844—

THE poetry of Robert Bridges is seldom if ever touched by passionate extreme. Until 1890, when a volume of *Shorter Poems* appeared, very little had been published by him in the regular way; his finest work, the sonnet sequence entitled *The Growth of Love*, having been privately printed and generally inaccessible.

Dr. Bridges was made Poet Laureate of England in 1913, succeeding Alfred Austin. He has never bid for popularity, but is content to sing only for those who have ears to hear the finer modulations of the Muse. Nothing can be more exquisite in their way than some of his brief lyrics, untouched by Euphuism, untroubled by any strident note. *I Have Loved Flowers that Fade* is a moment of lyrical perfection. Dr. Bridges is a physician by profession. He retired from practice in 1882.

ROBERT BRIDGES

I have Loved Flowers that Fade

I HAVE loved flowers that fade;
Within whose magic tents
Rich hues have marriage made
With sweet unmemoried scents:
A honeymoon delight—
A joy of love at sight,
That ages in an hour:
My song be like a flower!

I have loved airs that die
Before their charm is writ
Along a liquid sky
Trembling to welcome it.
Notes, that with pulse of fire
Proclaim the spirit's desire,
Then die, and are nowhere:
My song be like an air!

Die, song, die like a breath,
And wither as a bloom:
Fear not a flowery death,
Dread not an airy tomb!
Fly with delight, fly hence!
'Twas thine love's tender sense
To feast, now on thy bier
Beauty shall shed a tear.

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

ENGLAND, 1845—1907

A Flight from Glory

ONCE, from the parapet of gems and glow,
An Angel said, "O God, the heart grows cold
On these eternal battlements of gold,
Where all is pure, but cold as virgin snow.
Here sobs are never heard; no salt tears flow;
Here there are none to help—nor sick nor old;
No wrong to fight, no justice to uphold:
Grant me Thy leave to live man's life below."

"And then annihilation?" God replied.

"Yes," said the Angel, "even that dread price;
For earthly tears are worth eternal night."

"Then go," said God. The Angel opened wide
His dazzling wings, gazed back on Heaven thrice,
And plunged forever from the walls of Light.

Baudelaire

A PARIS gutter of the good old times,
Black and putrescent in its stagnant bed,
Save where the shamle ooziings fringe it red,
Or scaffold trickles, or nocturnal crimes.
It holds dropped gold; dead flowers from tropic climes;
Gems true and false, by midnight maskers shed;
Old pots of rouge; old broken phials that spread
Vague fumes of musk, with fumes from slums and
slimes.

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

And everywhere, as glows the set of day,
There floats upon the winding fetid mire
The gorgeous iridescence of decay:
A wavy film of color, gold and fire,
Trembles all through it as you pick your way,
And streaks of purple that are straight from Tyre.

Ipsissimus

THOU priest that art behind the screen
Of this confessional, give ear:
I need God's help, for I have seen
What turns my vitals limp with fear.
O Christ, O Christ, I must have done
More mortal sin than anyone
Who says his prayers in Venice here!

And yet by stealth I only tried
To kill my enemy, God knows;
And who on earth has ere denied
A man the right to kill his foes?
He won the race of the Gondoliers;
I hate him and the skin he wears;
I hate him and the shade he throws.

I hate him through each day and hour
All ills that curse me seem his fault
He makes my daily soup taste sour,
He makes my daily bread taste salt;
And so I hung upon his track
At dusk to stab him in the back
In some lone street or archway vault.

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

But oh give heed! As I was stealing
Upon his heels, with knife grasped tight,
There crept across my soul a feeling
That I myself was kept in sight;
Each time I turned, dodge as I would,
A masked and unknown watcher stood,
Who baffled all my plan that night.

What mask is this, I thought and thought,
Who dogs me thus when least I care?
His figure is nor tall nor short,
And yet has a familiar air.
But oh, despite this watcher's eye,
I'll reach my man yet by-and-by,
And snuff his life out yet, elsewhere.

And though compelled to still defer,
I schemed another project soon;
I armed my boat with a hidden spur
To run him down in the lagoon.
At dusk I saw him row one day
Where lone and wide the waters lay,
Reflecting scarce the dim white moon.

No boat, as far as sight could strain,
Loomed on the solitary sea;
I saw my oar each minute gain
Upon my death-doomed enemy,
When lo, a black-masked gondolier,
Silent and spectre-like, drew near,
And stepped between my deed and me

He seemed from out the flood to rise,
And hovered near to mar my game;
I knew him and his cursèd guise,

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

His cursèd mask: he was the same.
So, balked once more, enraged and cowed,
Back through the still lagoon I rowed
In mingled wonder, wrath and shame.

Oh, were I not to come and pray
Thee for thy absolution here
In the confessional, to-day,
My very ribs would burst with fear.
Leave not, good Father, in the lurch,
A faithful son of Mother Church,
Whose faith is firm and soul sincere.

Behind St. Luke's, as the dead men know,
A pale apothecary dwells,
Who deals in death both quick and slow,
And baleful philters, withering spells
He sells alike to rich and poor,
Who know what knock to give his door
The yellow dust that rings the knells.

Well, then, I went and knocked the knock
With cautious hand, as I'd been taught
The door revolved with silent lock,
And I went in, suspecting nought.
But oh, the selfsame form stood masked
Behind the counter, and unasked
In silence proffered what I sought.

My knees and hands like aspens shook;
I spilt the powder on the ground;
I dared not turn, I dared not look;
My palsied tongue would make no sound.
Then through the door I fled at last,

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

With feet that seemed more slow than fast,
And dared not even once look round.

And yet I am an honest man,
Who only sought to kill his foe:
Could I sit down and see each plan
That I took up frustrated so,
When as each plan was marred and balked,
And in the sun my man still walked,
I felt my hate still greater grow?

I thought, "At dusk with stealthy tread
I'll seek his dwelling, and I'll creep
Upstairs and hide beneath his bed,
And in the night I'll strike him deep."
And so I went; but at the door,
The figure, masked just as before,
Sat on the step as if asleep.

Bent, spite all fear, upon my task,
I tried to pass: there was no space.
Then rage prevailed; I snatched the mask
From off the baffling figure's face,
And oh, unutterable dread!
The face was mine, mine white and dead,
Stiff with some frightful death's grimace.

What sins are mine, O luckless wight,
That doom should play me such a trick,
And make me see a sudden sight
That turns both soul and body sick?
Stretch out thy hands, thou priest unseen,
That sittest there behind the screen,
And give me absolution quick!

EUGENE LEE-HAMILTON

O God, O God, his hands are dead!
His hands are mine, O monstrous spell!
I feel them clammy on my head,
Is he my own dead self as well?
Those hands are mine—their scars, their shape:
O God, O God, there's no escape,
And seeking Heaven, I fall to Hell.

Idle Charon

THE shores of Styx are lone forevermore,
And not one shadowy form upon the steep
Looms through the dusk, as far as eyes can sweep,
To call the ferry over as of yore;
But tintless rushes, all about the shore,
Have hemmed the old boat in, where, locked in sleep,
Hoar-bearded Charon lies; while pale weeds creep
With tightening grasp all round the unused oar.

For now in the world of Life strange rumors run
That now the Soul departs not with the breath,
But that the Body and the Soul are one;
And in the loved one's mouth, now, after death,
The widow puts no obol, nor the son,
To pay the ferry in the world beneath.

WILLIAM CANTON

ENGLAND, 1845—1925

As an historian and interpreter of child life both in verse and prose, William Canton occupies a unique position in English literature. Notable among his works of this character are *A Lost Epic and Other Poems* (1887); *The Invisible Playmate* (1894); *W. V., Her Book*; and *Various Verses* (1896). He was born on the Isle of Chusan, off the coast of China, and during the last of his life was engaged in editorial and literary work in Glasgow and London.

A New Poet

I WRITE. He sits beside my chair,
And scribbles, too, in hushed delight,
He dips his pen in charmed air:
What is it he pretends to write?

He toils and toils; the paper gives
No clue to aught he thinks. What then?
His little heart is glad; he lives
The poems that he cannot pen.

Strange fancies throng that baby brain,
What grave, sweet looks! What earnest eyes!
He stops—reflects—and now again
His unrecording pen he plies.

It seems a satire on myself—
These dreamy nothings scrawled in air,
This thought, this work! Oh, tricky elf,
Wouldst drive the father to despair?

WILLIAM CANTON

Despair! Ah, no; the heart, the mind
Persists in hoping—schemes and strives
That there may linger with our kind
Some memory of our little lives.

Beneath his rock in the early world
Smiling the naked hunter lay,
And sketched on horn the spear he hurled
The urus which he made his prey.

Like him I strive in hope my rhymes
May keep my name a little while—
O child, who knows how many times
We two have made the angels smile!

The Crow

WITH rakish eye and plenished crop
Oblivious of the farmer's gun,
Upon the naked ash-tree top
The Crow sits basking in the sun.

An old ungodly rogue, I wot!
For, perched in black against the blue,
His feathers torn with beak and shot,
Let woful glints of April through.

The year's new grass, and, golden-eyed,
The daisies sparkle underneath,
And chestnut-trees on either side
Have opened every ruddy sheath.

WILLIAM CANTON

But doubtful still of frost and snow,
The ash alone stands stark and bare,
And on its topmost twig the Crow
Takes the glad morning's sun and air.

GRANT ALLEN

ENGLAND, 1848—1901

A Prayer

A CROWNED Caprice is god of this world:
On his stony breast are his white wings furled.
No ear to listen, no eye to see,
No heart to feel for a man hath he.
But his pitiless arm is swift to smite;
And his mute lips utter one word of might,
Mid the clash of gentler souls and rougher,
"Wrong must thou do, or wrong must suffer."
Then grant, O dumb blind god, at least that we
Rather the sufferers than the doers be.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

ENGLAND, 1849—1903

THROUGH the poetry of Henley there runs one note piped in many keys. He sings the gospel of conflict; the gospel of war. We sometimes feel in his words the drive of the Demiurge, the gusto of a young god. There are some rough and even brutal passages in his poems; but his art, taken as a whole, is delicate, precise and finished. Although he was a tremendous influence as an editor and critic, it is as a poet that he is best remembered. He has

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

written at least two poems, *Invictus* and *England, My England*, that are likely to have an imperishable place. Of his famous runic rhyme, *The Song of the Sword*, Richard Le Gallienne says: "It is a fine piece of dithyrambic in the hurtling Norse rhythm, a mystical hymn elevating the sword of steel into a symbol of the sword of the spirit—otherwise the central creative 'will' in things, 'the will of God.'"

Henley read and assimilated many masters of song—Verlaine, Heine, Meredith, Whitman; but, as Arthur Symons observes, "with all this assimilation of influences, he developed a style in the highest degree personal." His poetry is largely physiological, largely pathological—nevertheless, it is poetry.

The Night Cat

FROM "LONDON VOLUNTARIES"

Henley's "Night Cat" is etched with acid phrase upon our memory. Le Gallienne, speaking of this passage, says: "Henley's fine gift of picture-making in two or three firm strokes, his instinct for the unique word, and likewise his uncanny phantasy, were never better displayed than in these lines. . . . Was ever anything more perfect than that cat?"

THROUGH street and square, through square and
street,
Each with his home-grown quality of dark
And violated silence, loud and fleet,
Waylaid by a merry ghost at every lamp,
The hansom wheels and plunges. . . .
Still, still the streets, between their carcanets

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Of linking gold, are avenues of sleep;
But see how gable ends and parapets
In gradual beauty and significance
Emerge! And did you hear
That little twitter-and-cheep,
Breaking inordinately loud and clear
On the still, spectral, exquisite atmosphere?
'Tis a first nest at matins! And behold
A rakeshell cat—how furtive and acold!
A spent witch homing from some infamous dance—
Obscene, quick-trotting, see her tip and fade
Through shadowy railings into a pit of shade!

The Wind-Fiend

FROM "LONDON VOLUNTARIES"

AND the high majesty of Paul's
Uplifts a voice of living light, and calls—
Calls to his millions to behold and see
How goodly this his London Town can be!
For earth and sky and air
Are golden everywhere,
And golden with a gold so suave and fine
The looking on it lifts the heart like wine.
Trafalgar Square
(The fountains volleying golden glaze)
Gleams like an angel market. . . .

Out of the poisonous East,
Over a continent of blight,
Like a maleficent Influence released
From the most squalid cellarage of hell,

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

The Wind-Fiend, the abominable—
The hangman wind that tortures temper and light—
Comes slouching, sullen and obscene,
Hard on the skirts of the embittered night:
And in a cloud unclean
Of excremental humors, roused to strife
By the operation of some ruinous change
Wherever his evil mandate run and range
Into a dire intensity of life,
A craftsman at his bench, he settles down
To the grim job of throttling London Town. . . .
And Death the while—
Death, with his well-worn, lean, professional smile,
Death in his threadbare working trim—
Comes to your bedside, unannounced and bland,
And with expert, inevitable hand
Feels at your windpipe, fingers you in the lung,
Or flicks the clot well into the laboring heart:
Thus signifying unto old and young,
However hard of mouth or wild of whim,
'Tis time—'tis time by his ancient watch—to part
With books and women and talk and drink and art:
And you go humbly after him
To a mean suburban lodging: on the way
To what or where
Not Death, who is old and very wise, can say:
And you—how should you care
So long as, unreclaimed of hell,
The Wind-Fiend, the insufferable,
Thus vicious and thus patient sits him down
To the black job of burking London Town?

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Invictus

Contrast this with Longfellow's "Psalm of Life." Here are the two approaches to the mystery of pain. Both views have truth in them.

BUT of the night that covers me,
Black as the pit from pole to pole,
I thank whatever gods may be
For my unconquerable soul.

In the fell clutch of circumstance
I have not winced nor cried aloud.
Under the bludgeonings of chance
My head is bloody, but unbowed.

Beyond this place of wrath and tears
Looms but the Horror of the shade,
And yet the menace of the years
Finds and shall find me unafraid.

It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishments the scroll,
I am the master of my fate:
I am the captain of my soul.

Margaritæ Sorori

ALATE lark twitters from the quiet skies
And from the west,
Where the sun, his day's work ended,
Lingers as in content,
There falls on the old, gray city

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

An influence luminous and serene,
A shining peace.
The smoke ascends
In a rosy-and-golden haze. The spires
Shine and are changed. In the valley
Shadows rise. The lark sings on. The sun
Closing his benediction,
Sinks, and the darkening air
Thrills with a sense of the triumphing night—
Night with her train of stars
And her great gift of sleep.

So be my passing!
My task accomplished and the long day done,
My wages taken, and in my heart
Some late lark singing,
Let me be gathered to the quiet west,
The sundown splendid and serene,
Death.

Or Ever the Knightly Years Were Gone

OR ever the knightly years were gone
With the old world to the grave,
I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Christian Slave.

I saw, I took, I cast you by,
I bent and broke your pride.
You loved me well, or I heard them lie,
But your longing was denied.
Surely I knew that by and by
You cursed your gods and died.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

And a myriad suns have set and shone
Since then upon the grave
Decreed by the King in Babylon
To her that had been his Slave.

The pride I trampled is now my scathe,
For it tramples me again.
The old resentment lasts like death,
For you love, yet you refrain.
I break my heart on your hard unfaith,
And I break my heart in vain.

Yet not for an hour do I wish undone
The deed beyond the grave,
When I was a King in Babylon
And you were a Virgin Slave.

Before

FROM "IN HOSPITAL"

BEHOLD me waiting—waiting for the knife.
A little while, and at a leap I storm
The thick sweet mystery of chloroform,
The drunken dark, the little death-in-life.
The gods are good to me: I have no wife,
No innocent child, to think of as I near
The fateful minute; nothing all-too dear
Unmans me for my bout of passive strife.

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Yet I am tremulous and a trifle sick,
And, face to face with chance, I shrink a little:
My hopes are strong, my will is something weak.
Here comes the basket? Thank you. I am ready.
But, gentlemen my porters, life is brittle:
You carry Cæsar and his fortunes—Steady!

England, My England

In this national lyric the powers of this original and impassioned genius appear in full luster. Excepting perhaps "The Marseillaise" and "The Battle Hymn of the Republic", it is the most thrilling national anthem in the world.

WHAT have I done for you,
England, my England?
What is there I would not do,
England, my own?
With your glorious eyes austere,
As the Lord were walking near,
Whispering terrible things and dear
As the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Round the world on your bugles blown!

Where shall the watchful sun,
England, my England,
Match the master-work you've done,
England, my own?
When shall he rejoice again
Such a breed of mighty men
As come forward, one to ten,
To the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Down the years on your bugles blown?

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

Ever the faith endures,
England, my England:—
"Take and break us: we are yours,
England, my own!
Life is good, and joy runs high
Between English earth and sky:
Death is death; but we shall die
To the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
To the stars on your bugles blown!"

They call you proud and hard,
England, my England:
You with worlds to watch and ward,
England, my own!
You whose mailed hand keeps the keys
Of such teeming destinies,
You could know nor dread nor ease
Were the Song on your bugles blown,
England,
Round the Pit on your bugles blown!

Mother of Ships whose might,
England, my England,
Is the fierce old Sea's delight,
England my own,
Chosen daughter of the Lord,
Spouse-in-Chief of the ancient Sword,
There's the menace of the Word
In the Song on your bugles blown,
England—
Out of heaven on your bugles blown!

WILLIAM ERNEST HENLEY

The Blackbird

It seems to me that this delightful lyric is marred by an untruth to fact. The lark does not utter a clarion call—only an intense twitter. I have heard English larks singing at sunset on some of the vacant blocks on the outer edges of Brooklyn. Up to a certain point, a poet should be as accurate as the scientist.

THE nightingale has a lyre of gold,
The lark's is a clarion call,
And the blackbird plays but a boxwood flute,
But I love him best of all.

For his song is all of the joy of life,
And we in the mad, spring weather,
We two have listened till he sang
Our hearts and lips together.

EDMUND GOSSE

ENGLAND, 1849—

EDMUND GOSSE, scholar, critic, poet, of recent years Librarian to the House of Lords, has also been Librarian in the British Museum and lecturer in Trinity College, Cambridge. He has received honors from France and Scandinavian countries for translations from their best literature. He was chief literary adviser in the tenth and eleventh editions of the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. He ranks as one of England's best conservative critics. Since his early book of verse, *On Viol and Flute*, he has written several other volumes marked by simplicity, restraint and exquisite diction.

Revelation

INTO the silver night
She brought with her pale hand
The topaz lanthorn-light,
And darted splendor o'er the land;
Around her in a band,
Ringstraked and pied, the great soft moths came flying,
And flapping with their mad wings, fanned
The flickering flame, ascending, falling, dying.

Behind the thorny pink
Close wall of blossomed may,
I gazed through one green chink
And saw no more than thousands may—
Saw sweetness, tender and gay—
Saw full rose lips as rounded as the cherry,
Saw braided locks more dark than bay,
And flashing eyes decorous, pure and merry.

With food for furry friends
She passed, her lamp and she,

EDMUND GOSSE

Till eaves and gable-ends
Hid all that saffron sheen from me:
Around my rosy tree
Once more the silver-starry night was shining,
With depths of heaven, dewy and free,
And crystals of a carven moon declining.

Alas! for him who dwells
In frigid air of thought,
When warmer light dispels
The frozen calm his spirit sought;
By life too lately taught
He sees the ecstatic Human from him stealing;
Reels from the joy experience brought,
And dares not clutch what Love was half revealing.

Impression

IN these restrained and careful times
Our knowledge petrifies our rhymes;
Ah! for that reckless fire men had
When it was witty to be mad;

When wild conceits were piled in scores,
And lit by flaming metaphors,
When all was crazed and out of tune—
Yet throbbed with music of the moon.

If we could dare to write as ill
As some whose voices haunt us still,
Even we, perchance, might call our own
Their deep enchanting undertone.

EDMUND GOSSE

We are too diffident and nice,
Too learnèd and too over-wise,
Too much afraid of faults to be
The flutes of bold sincerity.

For, as this sweet life passes by,
We blink and nod with critic eye;
We've no words rude enough to give
Its charm so frank and fugitive.

The green and scarlet of the Park,
The undulating streets at dark,
The brown smoke blown across the blue,
This colored city we walk through;

The pallid faces full of pain,
The field-smell of the passing wain,
The laughter, longing, perfume, strife,
The daily spectacle of life;

Ah! how shall this be given to rhyme,
By rhymesters of a knowing time?
Ah! for the age when verse was glad,
Being godlike, to be bad and mad.

Ballade of Dead Cities

The ballade is an old French form, built wholly on three rhyme-sounds. In connection with this ballade, see Rossetti's translation of Villon's "Ballade of Dead Ladies."

WHERE are the cities of the plain?
 And where the shrines of rapt Bethel?¹
 And Calah² built of Tubal-Cain?
 And Shinar³ whence King Amraphel
 Came out in arms, and fought and fell,
 Decoyed into the pits of slime
 By Siddim, and sent sheer to hell;
 Where are the cities of old time?

Where now is Karnak, that great fane
 With granite built, a miracle?
 And Luxor smooth without a stain,
 Whose graven scriptures still we spell?
 The jackal and the owl may tell,
 Dark snakes around their ruins climb,
 They fade like echo in a shell;
 Where are the cities of old time?

And where is white Shusan,⁴ again,
 Where Vashti's beauty bore the bell,
 And all the Jewish oil and grain
 Were brought to Mithridath to sell,
 Where Nehemiah⁵ would not dwell,
 Because another town sublime
 Decoyed him with her oracle?
 Where are the cities of old time?

¹ *Shrines of Bethel.* See *I Kings* 12: 28-33; 13: 1-5.

² *Calah.* See *Genesis* 10:11; the poet confuses Tubal-Cain and Nimrod.

³ *Shinar. . . Siddim.* *Genesis* 14:1-10.

⁴ *Shusan.* See *Esther* 1:5-11.

⁵ *Nehemiah.* See *Nehemiah* 1:1; 2:1-5.

EDMUND GOSSE

ENVOY

Prince, with a dolorous, ceaseless knell,
Above their wasted toil and crime
The waters of oblivion swell:
Where are the cities of old time?

CHARLOTTE MEW

ENGLAND, 19th Century

The Farmer's Bride

Here is a powerful story-poem—a stroke of genius. The time must come when there will be a way to set such captive women free.

THREE Summers since I chose a maid,
Too young maybe—but more's to do
At harvest-time than bide and woo.

When us was wed she turned afraid
Of love and me and all things human;
Like the shut of a winter's day.
Her smile went out, and 'twasn't a woman—
More like a little frightened fay.

One night, in the Fall, she runned away.

“Out 'mong the sheep, her be,” they said;
Should properly have been abed;
But sure enough she wasn't there,
Lying awake with her wide brown stare.
So over seven-acre field and up-along across the down
We chased her, flying like a hare
Before our lanterns. To Church-Town
All in a shiver and a scare

CHARLOTTE MEW

We caught her, fetched her home at last
And turned the key upon her, fast.

She does the work about the house
As well as most, but like a mouse:
Happy enough to chat and play
With birds and rabbits and such as they,
So long as men-folk keep away.

"Not near, not near!" her eyes beseech
When one of us comes within reach.
The women say that beasts in stall
Look round like children at her call.
I've hardly heard her speak at all.

Shy as a leveret, swift as he;
Straight and slight as a young larch tree;
Sweet as the first wild violets, she,
To her wild self. But what to me?

The short days shorten and the oaks are brown,
The blue smoke rises to the low grey sky,
One leaf in the still air falls slowly down,
A magpie's spotted feathers lie
On the black earth spread white with rime,
The berries redden up to Christmas-time.
What's Christmas time without there be
Some other in the house than we!

She sleeps up in the attic there
Alone, poor maid. 'Tis but a stair
Betwixt us. Oh! my God! the down,
The soft young down of her; the brown,
The brown of her—her eyes, her hair, her hair!

PHILIP BOURKE MARSTON

ENGLAND, 1850—1887

MELODY is one unfailing characteristic of this poet, who, as the result of an injury received in childhood, became blind in later years. The harp he touched was strung with silver chords, attuned to subtle sweetness, but his range of music was narrow, reaching no lofty heights and plunging to no profound depths. The influence of Dante Gabriel Rossetti is most marked in his poetry—an influence which tended to subordinate his own individuality. Nevertheless, he was an original poet, possessed of a lyric quality not unworthy of his great prototype.

No Death

I SAW in dreams a mighty multitude—
Gathered, they seemed, from North, South, East
and West,

And in their looks such horror was expressed
As must forever words of mine elude.

As if transfixed by grief, some silent stood,

While others wildly smote upon the breast,

And cried out fearfully, "No rest, no rest!"

Some fled, as if by shapes unseen pursued.

Some laughed insanely. Others shrieking, said:

"To think but yesterday we might have died;

For then God has not thundered, 'Death is dead!'"

They gashed themselves till they with blood were red.

"Answer, O God; take back this curse!" they cried,

But "Death is dead," was all the voice replied.

ISABELLA VALANCY CRAWFORD

IRELAND, 1850—1887

THIS poet came to Canada as a child. Poverty, isolation, lack of recognition, all retarded, perhaps largely withheld, her cradle-gift of poetic expression. She has vigor and vividness, and a feeling for the beauty and strangeness of things. She was a "newspaper-poet" in Toronto. Just before her death, her poems were collected, with an introduction by the poet Ethewyn Weatherald. In the poem quoted below, Valancy Crawford says a poignant thing upon a theme treated by hundreds since Sappho's lyric hour.

The Rose

THE Rose was given to man for this:
He, sudden seeing it in later years,
Should swift remember Love's first lingering kiss
And Grief's last lingering tears;

Or, being blind, should feel its yearning soul
Knit all its piercing perfume round his own,
Till he should see on Memory's ample scroll
All roses he had known;

Or, being hard, perchance his finger-tips
Careless might touch the satin of its cup,
And he should feel a dead babe's budding lips
To his lips lifted up;

ISABELLA VALANCY CRAWFORD

Or, being deaf and smitten with its star,
Should, on a sudden, almost hear a lark
Rush singing up—the nightingale afar
Sing through the dew-bright dark;

Or, sorrow-lost in paths that round and round
Circle old graves, its keen and vital breath
Should call to him within the yew's bleak bound
Of Life, and not of Death.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

SCOTLAND, 1850—1894

BESIDES being a great master of prose, as evidenced by his romances, essays and studies of men and books, Stevenson was a poet of distinction. *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885) was hailed by Brander Matthews as being "fresh, new, unconventional, unexpected: it has grace and charm, but despite all these qualities we receive it rather as the play of a prose writer than as the work of a poet." And Louis Untermeyer goes so far as to say that *The Child's Garden* is "second only to Mother Goose's own collection in its lyrical simplicity and universal appeal."

I have represented Stevenson with selections from his poetry for adults. His verse of this kind seems to me to have a rare singing quality and to display fine artistry. As an instance of the care Stevenson took with his verses, it is related that his famous *Requiem* was originally much longer than the two stanzas he finally gave to the world, after working over the poem ten years.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Requiem

UNDER the wide and starry sky
Dig the grave and let me lie:
Glad did I live and gladly die,
And I laid me down with a will.

This be the verse you grave for me:
Here he lies where he longed to be:
Home is the sailor, home from sea,
And the hunter home from the hill.

Evensong

THE embers of the day are red
Beyond the murky hill.
The kitchen smokes: the bed
In the darkling house is spread:
The great sky darkens overhead,
And the great woods are shrill.
So far have I been led,
Lord, by Thy will:
So far I have followed, Lord, and wondered still.

The breeze from the embalmèd land
Blows sudden toward the shore,
And claps my cottage door.
I hear the signal, Lord—I understand.
The night at Thy command
Comes. I will eat and sleep and will not question more.

If This Were Faith

GOD, if this were enough,
 That I see things bare to the buff
 And up to the buttocks in mire;
 That I ask nor hope nor hire,
 Nut in the husk,
 Nor dawn beyond dusk:
 God, if this were faith?

Having felt Thy wind in my face
 Spit sorrow and disgrace,
 Having seen Thine evil doom
 In Golgotha and Khartoum,
 And the brutes, the work of Thine hands,
 Fill with injustice lands
 And stain with blood the sea;
 If still in my veins the glee
 Of the black night and the sun
 And the lost battle, run;
 If, an adept,
 The iniquitous lists I still accept
 With joy, and joy to endure and be withstood,
 And still to battle and perish for a dream of good—
 God, if that were enough?

If to feel, in the ink of the slough,
 And the sink of the mire,
 Veins of glory and fire
 Run through and transpierce and transpire,
 And a secret purpose of glory in every part,
 And the answering glory of battle fill my heart;
 To thrill with the joy of girded men,
 To go on forever and fail and go on again,

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

And be mauled to the earth and arise,
And contend for the shade of word and a thing not seen
 with the eyes;
With the half of a broken hope for a pillow at night
That somehow the right is the right
And the smooth shall bloom from the rough—
Lord, if that were enough?

My Wife

TRUSTY, dusky, vivid, true,
 With eyes of gold and bramble-dew,
Steel-true and blade-straight,
 The great artificer
Made my mate.

Honor, anger, valor, fire;
A love that life could never tire,
 Death quench or evil stir,
The mighty master
 Gave to her.

Teacher tender, comrade wife,
A fellow-farer true through life,
 Heart-whole and soul-free
The august father
 Gave to me.

The Celestial Surgeon

IF I have faltered more or less
In my great task of happiness;
If I have moved among my race
And shown no glorious morning face;
If beams from happy human eyes
Have moved me not; if morning skies,
Books, and my food, and summer rain
Knocked on my sullen heart in vain—
Lord, thy most pointed pleasure take
And stab my spirit broad awake;
Or, Lord, if too obdurate I,
Choose thou, before that spirit die,
A piercing pain, a killing sin,
And to my dead heart run them in!

Youth and Love

ONCE only by the garden gate
Our lips we joined and parted.
I must fulfil an empty fate
And travel the uncharted.

Hail and farewell! I must arise,
Leave here the fatted cattle,
And paint on foreign land and skies
My Odyssey of battle.

The untented Kosmos my abode,
I pass, a wilful stranger:
My mistress still the open road
And the bright eyes of danger.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Come ill or well, the cross, the crown,
The rainbow or the thunder,
I fling my soul and body down
For God to plough them under.

The Vagabond

GIVE to me the life I love,
Let the lave¹ go by me—
Give the jolly heaven above
And the byway nigh me.
Bed in the bush with stars to see,
Bread I dip in the river:
There's the life for a man like me,
There's the life for ever.

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around
And the road before me.
Wealth I seek not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me;
All I seek, the heaven above
And the road below me.

Or let autumn fall on me
Where afield I linger,
Silencing the bird on tree,
Biting the blue finger:
White as meal the frosty field—

¹Lave is a Scottish word meaning the remainder, the refuse.

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON

Warm the fireside haven—
Not to autumn will I yield,
Not to winter even!

Let the blow fall soon or late,
Let what will be o'er me;
Give the face of earth around,
And the road before me.
Wealth I ask not, hope nor love,
Nor a friend to know me.
All I ask the heaven above,
And the road below me.

THEOPHILE MARZIALS

ENGLAND, 1850—

A Tragedy

SHE was only a woman, famished for loving,
Mad with devotion, and such slight things;
And he was a very great musician,
And used to finger his fiddle-strings.

Her heart's sweet gamut is cracking and breaking
For a look, for a touch—for such slight things;
But he's such a very great musician
Grimacing and fingering his fiddle-strings.

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, 19TH CENTURY

From "The Poems of West Ham"

Here is the West Ham poem that was crowned by Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch.

FROM a high place I saw the city
Open and bare below me spread,
And therein walked (O God of pity!)
Few living, many dead.

Dead men entombed in daily labor,
Grappling for gold in ghostly strife;
Dead neighbors chattering to dead neighbors;
And dead youth—seeing life.

Dead women decking lifeless bodies
(See, what a gay and lovely shroud!)
And in rich temples, where no God is,
Dead corpses, praying loud.

But, oh, my eyes were ever turning,
With joy and tender deep delight
To where, like stars in dark skies burning,
The living souls shone bright.

Where are her priestly hands preparing
Holy mother and happy wife?
Daily her humble home is sharing
The bread and wine of life.

ANONYMOUS

The neighbors seek her fireside, telling
Of sacred sorrow, joyous plan;
And often quietly in her dwelling
Meet with the Son of Man.

See where the craftsman's last touch lingers
To draw the wonder from the wood,
As life and love, poured through his fingers,
Create and call it good.

* * * * *

Yonder a youth, afire with pity,
Cries in the press most passionately,
"Comrades, arise! and build a city
Fit dwelling for the free!"

He cries. The dead men pass. The pavement
Echoes his voice. Yet, if one stay,
Hope whispers that one opening grave meant
A resurrection day!

There a stern gray-haired prophet preaches
To proud pews full of dull and dead;
And there a gentle schoolma'am teaches
With glory round her head.

Many the dead, and few the living?
Yet see life springing everywhere—
Leaping from soul to soul, and giving
A pause to our despair.

And comes the wind of God's voice sweeping—
"Blind seer, behold again! for they,
Whom you called dead men, are but sleeping
And shall awake one day!"

ANONYMOUS
ENGLAND, 19TH CENTURY

Remonstrance With the Snails

Here is one of the superbly clever things in the world of humor. How pale beside this is the clever snail-poem of Charles Lamb!

Y E little snails,
With slippery tails,
Who noiselessly travel
Along this gravel,
By a silvery path of slime unsightly,
I learn that you visit my pea-rows nightly.
Felonious your visit, I guess!
And I give you this warning,
That, every morning,
I'll strictly examine the pods;
And if one I hit on,
With slaver or spit on,
Your next meal will be with the gods.

I own you're a very ancient race,
And Greece and Babylon were amid:
You have tenanted many a royal dome,
And dwelt in the oldest pyramid,
The source of the Nile!—Oh, you have been there,
In the ark was your floodless bed;
On the moonless night of Marathon
You crawled o'er the mighty dead;
But still, though I reverence your ancestries,
I don't see why you should nibble my peas.

ANONYMOUS

The meadows are yours—the hedgerow and brook,
You may bathe in their dew at morn;
By the aged sea you may sound your *shells*,
On the mountains erect your *horn*:
The fruits and the flowers are your rightful dowers,
Then why—in the name of wonder—
Should my six pea-rows be the only cause
To excite your midnight plunder?

I have never disturbed your slender shells;
You have hung round my aged walk;
And each might have sat, till he died in his fat,
Beneath his own cabbage-stalk.
But now you must fly from the soil of your sires;
Then put on your liveliest crawl,
And think of your poor little snails at home,
Now orphans or emigrants all.

Utensils domestic and civil and social
I give you an evening to pack up;
But if the moon of this night does not rise on your flight,
To-morrow I'll hang each man Jack up.
You'll think of my peas and your thievish tricks,
With tears of slime, when crossing the *Styx*.

FRANCIS WILLIAM BOURDILLON

ENGLAND, 1852—

ALTHOUGH his poetic works comprise several volumes,
it is the following lyric that has made the name of this
poet known to all who thrill to the joy of grief.

The Night Has a Thousand Eyes

THE night has a thousand eyes
And the day but one,
Yet the light of the bright world dies
With the dying sun.

The mind has a thousand eyes,
And the heart but one;
Yet the light of a whole life dies
When love is done.

ALICE MEYNELL

ENGLAND, 1853—1922

ALICE MEYNELL'S *Collected Poems* contain only seventy-six titles. Her lyric, *A Thrush at Dawn*, has a special interest for me, seeing that over forty years ago I published in *Scribner's* a poem on the same theme, calling it, *A Lyric of the Dawn*. Her lines should always be read in connection with Richard LeGallienne's marvellous poem, *A Bird at Dawn*, a poem that penetrates the secret of this mysterious singer of the early morning.

There is frequently a slow plodding movement in Alice Meynell's meters. A distinguished critic says that he finds in her lines "a certain lack of magic, of rhythmical life." This tells her trouble in a few words. The first duty of a singer is to sing, and yet only a few of her lines have the flight of song.

It should never be forgotten that Alice Meynell and her husband, Wilfrid Meynell, befriended Francis Thompson in his early adversity, lifted him out of his tragic poverty in the dismal streets of London, giving him the social and economic environment needed for the blossoming of his poetic genius. Here was a deed worthy of immortal memory.

The Thrush Before Dawn

A VOICE peals in this end of night—
A phrase of notes resembling stars,
Single and spiritual notes of light.

What call they at my window-bars?
The South, the past, the day to be,
An ancient infelicity.

Darkling, deliberate, what sings
This wonderful one, alone, at peace?
What wilder things than song, what things
Sweeter than youth, clearer than Greece,
Dearer than Italy—untold
Delight, and freshness centuries old?

And first first-loves, a multitude,
The exaltation of their pain;
Ancestral childhood long renewed;
And midnights of invisible rain;
And gardens, gardens, night and day,
Gardens and childhood all the way.

What Middle Ages passionate,
O passionate voice! What distant bells
Lodged in the hills, what palace state
Illyrian! For it speaks, it tells,
Without desire, without dismay,
Some morrow, and some yesterday.

All—natural things! But more—whence came
This yet remoter mystery?
How do these starry notes proclaim

A graver still divinity?
This hope, this sanctity of fear?
O innocent throat! O human ear!

Renouncement

Richard LeGallienne finds this sonnet to be "a deep moving expression, simple, poignant and final, a tragedy constant to the human heart." And Dante Gabriel Rossetti ranked it as "one of the three finest sonnets ever written by a woman."

I MUST not think of thee; and, tired yet strong,
I shun the love that lurks in all delight—
The love of thee—and in the blue heaven's height,
And in the dearest passage of a song.
Oh, just beyond the fairest thoughts that throng
This breast, the thought of thee waits hidden yet
bright;
But it must never, never come in sight:
I must stop short of thee the whole day long.

But when sleep comes to close each difficult day,
When night gives pause to the long watch I keep,
And all my bonds I needs must loose apart,
Must doff my will as raiment laid away—
With the first dream that comes with the first sleep
I run, I run, I am gathered to thy heart.

ALICE MEYNELL

To a Daisy

I agree with Richard LeGallienne when he says boldly that Alice Meynell's sonnet concerning the daisy is more successful than Wordsworth's several attempts to voice the deeper meaning of this flower. The critic says further: "She has gone to the heart of the mystery—

'Thou little veil for so great mystery.'"

Here is the mystic's deep vision of it, the same transfiguration of the unit by the absolute as in Tennyson's vision of the 'flower in the crannied wall.'"

S LIGHT as thou art, thou art enough to hide
Like all created things, secrets from me,
And stand a barrier to eternity.

And I, how can I praise thee well and wide
From where I dwell—upon the hither side?

Thou little veil for so great mystery,

When shall I penetrate all things and thee,
And then look back? For this I must abide,

Till thou shalt grow and fold and be unfurled
Literally between me and the world.

Then I shall drink from in beneath a spring,
And from a poet's side shall read his book.

O daisy mine, what will it be to look

From God's side even of such a simple thing?

WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND

CANADA, 1854—1907

ALTHOUGH born in Ireland, the late Dr. Drummond early went to Canada, where, on receiving his M.D., he established his practice in a mixed community of Indians, French-Canadians, Scotch-Irish and English, which to his unusual powers of observation offered a splendid field for character study. He is especially successful in portraying the French *habitant* of the forest and lumber camp. His works include *Johnnie Courteau and Other Poems*, from which the following is taken. His *Collected Poems* appeared in 1912.

Little Bateese

YOU bad leetle boy, not moche you care
How busy you're kipin' your poor gran'père
Tryin' to stop you ev'ry day,
Chasin' de hen aroun' de hay—
W'y don't you geev' dem a chance to lay?
Leetle Bateese!

Off on de fiel' you foller de plough;
Den w'en you're tire you scare de cow,
Sickin' de dog till dey jomp de wall,
So de milk ain't good for not'ing at all—
An' you're only five an' a half dis fall,
Leetle Bateese!

WILLIAM HENRY DRUMMOND

Too sleepy for sayin' de prayer to-night?
Never min': I s'pose it'll be all right
Say dem to-morrow—Ah, dere he go!
Fast asleep in a minute or so—
An' he'll stay lak dat till de rooster crow,
Leetle Bateese!

Den wake us up right away toute suite,
Lookin' for somet'ing more to eat,
Makin' me t'ink of dem long leg crane—
Soon as dey swaller, dey start again;
I wonder your stomach don't get no pain,
Leetle Bateese!

But see heem now lyin' dere in bed,
Look at de arm onderneat' hees head:
If he grow lak dat till he's twenty year
I bet he'll be stronger dan Louis Cyr,
An' beat all de voyageurs leevin' here,
Leetle Bateese!

Jus' feel de muscle along hees back,
Won't geev' heem moche bodder for carry pack
On de long portage, any size canoe:
Dere's not many t'ing dat boy won't do,
For he's got double-joint on hees body too,
Leetle Bateese!

But leetle Bateese! please don't forget
We rader you're stayin' de small boy yet;
So chase de chicken an' mak' dem scare
An' do w'at you lak wit' your ole gran'père,
For when you're beeg feller he won't be dere—
Leetle Bateese!

OSCAR WILDE

ENGLAND, 1856—1900

HERE is a literary æsthete who may be yoked with François Villon as forming two of the strangest riddles in the history of poetic genius. He wrote prose sparkling with epigrams and paradoxes, many of them going out upon the four winds. Much of his poetry is heated and hectic; but his prison life seems to have sobered and sweetened his mind. For, in his prose pamphlet, *De Profundis*, and in his famous *Ballad of Reading Gaol* (1898) he touches the deepest and sincerest note his soul ever sounded. This ballad is doubtless one of the things that will echo on into the centuries. It bears some resemblance to, and probably was motivated by, Thomas Hood's *The Dream of Eugene Aram*.

Oscar Wilde attracted sudden attention by appearing in the streets of London in knee-breeches and velvet coat, carrying a lily or a sunflower in his hand. At Halifax—while he was on tour—a reporter said of him: "The apostle had no lily, nor yet a sunflower. He wore a velvet jacket, which seemed to be a good jacket. He had an ordinary necktie, and wore a linen collar, about number eighteen, on a neck half a dozen sizes smaller. His legs were in trousers, and his boots apparently were the product of New York art, judging by their pointed toes. His hair is the color of straw, slightly leonine, and when not looked after goes climbing all over his features."

Wilde made Art his goddess, and he tells the world of the fact in this rather flamboyant fashion: "I altered the minds of men and the colors of things: there was nothing I said or did that did not make people wonder. I took the drama, the most objective form known to art, and made it as personal a mode of expression as the lyric or the

OSCAR WILDE

sonnet; at the same time I widened its range and enriched its characterization. Drama, novel, poem in prose, poem in rhyme, subtle or fantastic dialogue, whatever I touched I made beautiful in a new mode of beauty; to truth itself I gave what is false no less than what is true as its rightful province, and showed that the false and true are merely forms of intellectual existence. I treated Art as the supreme reality and Life as a mere mode of fiction. I awoke the imagination of my century so that it created myth and legend around me. I summed up all systems in a phrase and all existence in an epigram."

In a more sobered spirit, he thus gives his artistic credo: "My own experience is that the more we study Art the less we care for Nature. What Art really reveals to us is Nature's lack of design, her curious crudities, her extraordinary monotony, her absolutely unfinished condition. . . . Art is our spirited protest, our gallant attempt to teach Nature her proper place." And then with characteristic humor he says: "Nature is so uncomfortable. Grass is hard and lumpy and damp, and full of dreadful insects. Why, even Morris's poorest workman could make you a more comfortable seat than the whole of Nature can."

Nathan Haskell Dole closes his entertaining introduction to *The Poetical Works of Oscar Wilde* with these compassionate words: "The hypocritical hysteria that caused persons no better than himself to hound him and persecute him died down. Whether his crime was due to insanity or to mere moral perversity, the treatment to which he was subjected was simply outrageous. The repentant world is now ready to take him at his real value, with pity for his weakness and his sins, but with admiration for his brilliant genius."

A priest was called to Wilde's bedside in his last illness. He died in Paris, surrounded by aspects of pity, piety and poverty.

Sonnet to Liberty

NOT that I love thy children, whose dull eyes
 See nothing but their own unlovely woe,
 Whose minds know nothing, nothing care to know—
 But that the roar of thy Democracies,
 Thy reigns of Terror, thy great Anarchies,
 Mirror my wildest passions like the sea
 And give my rage a brother—! Liberty!
 For this sake only do thy dissonant cries
 Delight my discreet soul, else might all kings
 By bloody knout or treacherous cannonades
 Rob nations of their rights inviolate
 And I remain unmoved—and yet, and yet,
 These Christs that die upon the barricades,
 God knows that I am with them, in some things.

Hélas

TO drift with every passion, till my soul
 Is a stringed lute on which all winds can play,
 Is it for this that I have given away
 Mine ancient wisdom and austere control?
 Methinks my life is a twice-written scroll,
 Scrawled over on some boyish holiday
 With idle songs for pipe or virelay,
 Which do but mar the secret of the whole.

Surely there was a time I might have trod
 The sunlit heights, and from life's dissonance
 Struck one clear chord to reach the ear of God!
 Is that time dead? Lo! with a little rod
 I did but touch the honey of romance,
 And must I lose a soul's inheritance?

The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Gilbert Chesterton—one of the four outstanding literary men of contemporary England—says of this masterpiece: "It is the one real thing Wilde ever wrote—"The Ballad of Reading Gaol"—in which we hear the cry for common justice and brotherhood, very much deeper, more democratic and more true to the real trend of the populace today than anything the Socialist ever uttered even in the boldest pages of Bernard Shaw."

II

HE did not wear his scarlet coat,
 For blood and wine are red,
 And blood and wine were on his hands
 When they found him with the dead,
 The poor dead woman whom he loved,
 And murdered in her bed.

He walked amongst the Trial Men
 In a suit of shabby gray;
 A cricket cap was on his head,
 And his step seemed light and gay;
 But I never saw a man who looked
 So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
 With such a wistful eye
 Upon that little tent of blue
 Which prisoners call the sky,
 And at every drifting cloud that went
 With sails of silver by.

OSCAR WILDE

I walked, with other souls in pain,
Within another ring,
And was wondering if the man had done
A great or little thing,
When a voice behind me whispered low,
"That fellow's got to swing."

Dear Christ! the very prison walls
Suddenly seemed to reel,
And the sky above my head became
Like a casque of scorching steel;
And, though I was a soul in pain,
My pain I could not feel.

I only knew what hunted thought
Quickened his step, and why
He looked upon the garish day
With such a wistful eye;
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

Yet each man kills the thing he loves,
By each let this be heard;
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

Some kill their love when they are young,
And some when they are old;
Some strangle with the hands of Lust,
Some with the hands of Gold:
The kindest use a knife, because
The dead so soon grow cold.

OSCAR WILDE

Some love too little, some too long,
Some sell, and others buy;
Some do the deed with many tears,
And some without a sigh:
For each man kills the thing he loves,
Yet each man does not die.

He does not die a death of shame
On a day of dark disgrace,
Nor have a noose about his neck,
Nor a cloth upon his face,
Nor drop feet foremost through the floor
Into an empty space.

He does not sit with silent men
Who watch him night and day;
Who watch him when he tries to weep,
And when he tries to pray;
Who watch him lest himself should rob
The prison of its prey.

He does not wake at dawn to see
Dread figures throng his room,
The shivering Chaplain robed in white,
The Sheriff stern with gloom,
And the Governor all in shiny black,
With the yellow face of Doom.

He does not rise in piteous haste
To put on convict-clothes,
While some coarse-mouthed Doctor gloats, and notes
Each new and nerve-twitched pose,
Fingering a watch whose little ticks
Are like horrible hammer-blows.

OSCAR WILDE

He does not know that sickening thirst
That sands one's throat, before
The hangman with his gardener's gloves
Slips through the padded door,
And binds one with three leathern thongs,
That the throat may thirst no more.

He does not bend his head to hear
The Burial Office read,
Nor, while the terror of his soul
Tells him he is not dead,
Cross his own coffin, as he moves
Into the hideous shed.

He does not stare upon the air
Through a little roof of glass;
He does not pray with lips of clay
For his agony to pass;
Nor feel upon his shuddering cheek
That kiss of Caiaphas.

II

Six weeks our guardsman walked the yard,
In the suit of shabby gray:
His cricket cap was on his head,
And his step seemed light and gay,
But I never saw a man who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw a man who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
Which prisoners call the sky,

OSCAR WILDE

And at every wandering cloud that trailed
Its raveled fleeces by.

He did not wring his hands, as do
Those witless men who dare
To try to rear the changeling Hope
In the cave of black Despair:
He only looked upon the sun,
And drank the morning air.

He did not wring his hands nor weep,
Nor did he peek or pine,
But he drank the air as though it held
Some healthful anodyne;
With open mouth he drank the sun
As though it had been wine!

And I and all the souls in pain,
Who tramped the other ring,
Forgot if we ourselves had done
A great or little thing,
And watched with gaze of dull amaze
The man who had to swing.

And strange it was to see him pass
With a step so light and gay,
And strange it was to see him look
So wistfully at the day,
And strange it was to think that he
Had such a debt to pay.

For oak and elm have pleasant leaves
That in the spring-time shoot:
But grim to see is the gallows-tree,
With its adder-bitten root,

OSCAR WILDE

And, green or dry, a man must die
Before it bears its fruit!

The loftiest place is that seat of grace
For which all wordlings try:
But who would stand in hempen band
Upon a scaffold high,
And through a murderer's collar take
His last look at the sky?

It is sweet to dance to violins
When Love and Life are fair:
To dance to flutes, to dance to lutes
Is delicate and rare:
But it is not sweet with nimble feet
To dance upon the air!

So with curious eyes and sick surmise
We watched him day by day,
And wondered if each one of us
Would end the self-same way,
For none can tell to what red Hell
His sightless soul may stray.

At last the dead man walked no more
Amongst the Trial Men,
And I knew that he was standing up
In the black dock's dreadful pen,
And that never would I see his face
In God's sweet world again.

Like two doomed ships that pass in storm,
We had crossed each other's way:
But we made no sign, we said no word,
We had no word to say;

OSCAR WILDE

For we did not meet in the holy night,
But in the shameful day.

A prison wall was round us both,
Two outcast men we were:
The world had thrust us from its heart,
And God from out his care:
And the iron gin that waits for Sin
Had caught us in its snare.

III

In Debtor's Yard the stones are hard,
And the dripping wall is high,
So it was there he took the air
Beneath the leaden sky,
And by each side a Warder walked,
For fear the man might die.

Or else he sat with those who watched
His anguish night and day;
Who watched him when he rose to weep,
And when he crouched to pray;
Who watched him lest himself should rob
Their scaffold of its prey.

The Governor was strong upon
The Regulations Act:
The Doctor said that Death was but
A scientific fact:
And twice a day the Chaplain called,
And left a little tract.

And twice a day he smoked his pipe,
And drank his quart of beer:

OSCAR WILDE

His soul was resolute, and held
No hiding-place for fear;
He often said that he was glad
The hangman's hands were near.

But why he said so strange a thing
No Warder dared to ask:
For he to whom a watcher's doom
Is given as his task,
Must set a lock upon his lips,
And make his face a mask.

Or else he might be moved, and try
To comfort or console:
And what should Human Pity do
Pent up in Murderers' Hole?
What word of grace in such a place
Could help a brother's soul?

With slouch and swing around the ring
We trod the Fools' Parade!
We did not care: we knew we were
The Devil's Own Brigade:
And shaven head and feet of lead
Make a merry masquerade.

We tore the tarry rope to shreds
With blunt and bleeding nails;
We rubbed the doors, and scrubbed the floors,
And cleaned the shining rails:
And, rank by rank, we soaped the plank,
And clattered with the pails.

We sewed the sacks, we broke the stones,
We turned the dusty drill:

OSCAR WILDE

We banged the tins, and bawled the hymns,
And sweated on the mill:
But in the heart of every man
Terror was lying still.

So still it lay that every day
Crawled like a weed-clogged wave:
And we forgot the bitter lot
That waits for fool and knave,
Till once, as we tramped in from work,
We passed an open grave.

With yawning mouth the yellow hole
Gaped for a living thing;
The very mud cried out for blood
To the thirsty asphalt ring:
And we knew that ere one dawn grew fair,
Some prisoner had to swing.

Right in we went, with soul intent
On Death and Dread and Doom:
The hangman, with his little bag,
Went shuffling through the gloom:
And each man trembled as he crept
Into his numbered tomb.

That night the empty corridors
Were full of forms of Fear,
And up and down the iron town
Stole feet we could not hear,
And through the bars that hide the stars
White faces seemed to peer.

He lay as one who lies and dreams
In a pleasant meadow-land,

OSCAR WILDE

The watchers watched him as he slept,
And could not understand
How one could sleep so sweet a sleep
With a hangman close at hand.

But there is no sleep when men must weep
Who never yet have wept:
So we—the fool, the fraud, the knave—
That endless vigil kept,
And through each brain on hands of pain
Another's terror crept.

Alas! it is a fearful thing
To feel another's guilt!
For, right within, the sword of Sin
Pierced to its poisoned hilt,
And as molten lead were the tears we shed
For the blood we had not spilt.

The Warders with their shoes of felt
Crept by each padlocked door,
And peeped and saw, with eyes of awe,
Gray figures on the floor,
And wondered why men knelt to pray
Who never prayed before.

All through the night we knelt and prayed,
Mad mourners of a corse!
The troubled plumes of midnight were
The plumes upon a hearse:
And bitter wine upon a sponge
Was the savor of Remorse.

The gray cock crew, the red cock crew,
But never came the day;

OSCAR WILDE

And crooked shapes of terror crouched
In the corners where we lay:
And each evil sprite that walks by night
Before us seemed to play.

They glided past, they glided fast,
Like travelers through a mist:
They mocked the moon in a rigadoon
Of delicate turn and twist,
And with formal pace and loathsome grace
The phantoms kept their tryst.

With mop and mow, we saw them go,
Slim shadows hand and hand:
About, about, in ghostly rout
They trod a saraband:
And the damned grotesques made arabesques,
Like the wind upon the sand!

With pirouettes of marionettes
They tripped on pointed tread:
But with flutes of Fear they filled the ear,
As their grisly masque they led,
And loud they sang, and long they sang,
For they sang to wake the dead.

"Oho!" they cried. *"The world is wide,
But fettered limbs go lame!
And once, or twice, to throw the dice
Is a gentlemanly game,
But he does not win who plays with Sin
In the Secret House of Shame."*

No things of air these antics were,
That frolicked with such glee:

OSCAR WILDE

To men whose lives were held in gyves,
And whose feet might not go free,
Ah! wounds of Christ! they were living things,
Most terrible to see.

Around, around, they waltzed and wound;
Some wheeled in smirking pairs;
With the mincing step of a demirep
Some sidled up the stairs:
And with subtle sneer, and fawning leer,
Each helped us at our prayers.

The morning wind began to moan,
But still the night went on;
Through its giant loom the web of gloom
Crept till each thread was spun:
And, as we prayed, we grew afraid
Of the Justice of the Sun.

The moaning wind went wandering round
The weeping prison-wall:
Till like a wheel of turning steel
We felt the minutes crawl:
O moaning wind! what had we done
To have such a seneschal?

At last I saw the shadowed bars,
Like a lattice wrought in lead,
Move right across the whitewashed wall
That faced my three-planked bed,
And I knew that somewhere in the world
God's dreadful dawn was red.

At six o'clock we cleaned our cells,
At seven all was still,

OSCAR WILDE

But the sough and swing of a mighty wing
The prison seemed to fill,
For the Lord of Death with icy breath,
Had entered in to kill.

He did not pass in purple pomp,
Nor ride a moon-white steed.
Three yards of cord and a sliding board
Are all the gallows' need:
So with rope of shame the Herald came
To do the secret deed.

We were as men who through a fen
Of filthy darkness grope:
We did not dare to breathe a prayer,
Or to give our anguish scope:
Something was dead in each of us,
And what was dead was Hope.

For Man's grim Justice goes its way,
And will not swerve aside:
It slays the weak, it slays the strong,
It has a deadly stride:
With iron heel it slays the strong,
The monstrous parricide!

We waited for the stroke of eight:
Each tongue was thick with thirst:
For the stroke of eight is the stroke of Fate
That makes a man accursed,
And Fate will use a running noose
For the best man and the worst.

We had no other thing to do,
Save to wait for the sign to come:

OSCAR WILDE

So, like things of stone in a valley lone,
Quiet we sat and dumb:
But each man's heart beat thick and quick,
Like a madman on a drum!

With sudden shock, the prison-clock
Smote on the shivering air,
And from all the jail rose up a wail
Of impotent despair,
Like the sound that frightened marshes hear
From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most dreadful things
In the crystal of a dream,
We saw the greasy hempen rope
Hooked to the blackened beam,
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
Strangled into a scream.

And all the woe that moved him so
That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
None knew so well as I:
For he who lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die.

IV

There is no chapel on the day
On which they hang a man:
The Chaplain's heart is far too sick,
Or his face is far too wan,
Or there is that written in his eyes
Which none should look upon.

OSCAR WILDE

So they kept us close till nigh on noon,
And then they rang the bell,
And the Warders with their jingling keys
Opened each listening cell,
And down the iron stair we tramped,
Each from his separate Hell.

Out into God's sweet air we went,
But not in wonted way,
For this man's face was white with fear,
And that man's face was gray,
And I never saw sad men who looked
So wistfully at the day.

I never saw sad men who looked
With such a wistful eye
Upon that little tent of blue
We prisoners call the sky,
And at every careless cloud that passed
In happy freedom by.

But there were those amongst us all
Who walked with downcast head,
And knew that, had each got his due,
They should have died instead;
He had but killed a thing that lived,
Whilst they had killed the dead.

For he who sins a second time
Wakes a dead soul to pain,
And draws it from its spotted shroud,
And makes it bleed again,
And makes it bleed great gouts of blood,
And makes it bleed in vain!

OSCAR WILDE

Like ape or clown, in monstrous garb
With crooked arrows starred,
Silently we went round and round
The slippery asphalt yard;
Silently we went round and round
And no man spoke a word.

Silently we went round and round,
And through each hollow mind
The Memory of dreadful things
Rushed like a dreadful wind,
And Honor stalked before each man,
And Terror crept behind.

The Warders strutted up and down,
And kept their herd of brutes,
Their uniforms were spick and span,
They wore their Sunday suits,
But we knew the work they had been at,
By the quicklime on their boots.

For where a grave had opened wide,
There was no grave at all:
Only a stretch of mud and sand
By the hideous prison-wall,
And all the while the burning lime
That the man should have his pall.

For he has a pall, this wretched man,
Such as few men can claim:
Deep down below a prison-yard,
Naked for greater shame,
He lies, with fetters on each foot,
Wrapped in a sheet of flame!

OSCAR WILDE

And all the while the burning lime
Eats flesh and bone away,
It eats the brittle bone by night,
And the soft flesh by day,
It eats the flesh and bone by turns,
But it eats the heart away.

For three long years they will not sow
Or root or seedling there:
For three long years the unblessed spot
Will sterile be and bare,
And look upon the wondering sky
With unreproachful stare.

They think a murderer's heart would taint
Each simple seed they sow.
It is not true! God's kindly earth
Is kindlier than men know,
And the red rose would but blow more red,
The white rose whiter blow.

Out of his mouth a red, red rose!
Out of his heart a white!
For who can say by what strange way
Christ brings his will to light,
Since the barren staff the pilgrim bore
Bloomed in the great Pope's sight?

But neither milk-white rose nor red
May bloom in prison air;
The shard, the pebble, and the flint,
Are what they give us there:
For flowers have been known to heal
A common man's despair.

OSCAR WILDE

So never will wine-red rose or white
Petal by petal, fall
On that stretch of mud and sand that lies
By that hideous prison-wall,
To tell the men who tramp the yard
That God's Son died for all.

Yet though the hideous prison-wall
Still hems him round and round,
And a spirit may not walk by night
That is with fetters bound,
And a spirit may but weep that lies
In such unholy ground,

He is at peace—this wretched man—
At peace, or will be soon:
There is no thing to make him mad,
Nor does Terror walk at noon,
For the lampless Earth in which he lies
Has neither Sun nor Moon.

They hanged him as a beast is hanged:
They did not even toll
A requiem that might have brought
Rest to his startled soul,
But hurriedly they took him out,
And hid him in a hole.

They stripped him of his canvas clothes,
And gave him to the flies:
They mocked the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes:
And with laughter loud they heaped the shroud
In which their convict lies.

OSCAR WILDE

The Chaplain would not kneel to pray
By his dishonored grave:
Nor mark it with that blessed Cross
That Christ for sinners gave,
Because the man was one of those
Whom Christ came down to save.

Yet all is well; he has but passed
To Life's appointed bourne:
And alien tears will fill for him
Pity's long-broken urn,
For his mourners will be outcast men,
And outcasts always mourn.

v

I know not whether Laws be right,
Or whether Laws be wrong;
All that we know who lie in jail
Is that the wall is strong;
And that each day is like a year,
A year whose days are long.

But this I know, that every Law
That men have made for Man,
Since first Man took his brother's life,
And this sad world began,
But straws the wheat and saves the chaff
With a most evil fan.

This too I know—and wise it were
If each could know the same—
That every prison that men build
Is built with bricks of shame,
And bound with bars lest Christ should see
How men their brothers maim.

OSCAR WILDE

With bars they blur the gracious moon,
And blind the goodly sun:
And they do well to hide their Hell,
For in it things are done
That Son of God nor son of Man
Ever should look upon!

The vilest deeds like poison weeds
Bloom well in prison-air:
It is only what is good in Man
That wastes and withers there:
Pale Anguish keeps the heavy gate,
And the Warder is Despair.

For they starve the little frightened child,
Till it weeps both night and day:
And they scourge the weak, and flog the fool,
And gibe the old and gray,
And some grow mad, and all grow bad,
And none a word may say.

Each narrow cell in which we dwell
Is a foul and dark latrine,
And the fetid breath of living Death
Chokes up each grated screen,
And all, but Lust, is turned to dust
In Humanity's machine.

The brackish water that we drink
Creeps with a loathsome slime,
And the bitter bread they weigh in scales
Is full of chalk and lime,
And Sleep will not lie down, but walks
Wild-eyed, and cries to Time.

OSCAR WILDE

But though lean Hunger and green Thirst
Like asp with added fight,
We have little care of prison fare,
For what chills and kills outright
Is that every stone one lifts by day
Becomes one's heart by night.

With midnight always in one's heart,
And twilight in one's cell,
We turn the crank, or tear the rope,
Each in his separate Hell,
And the silence is more awful far
Than the sound of a brazen bell.

And never a human voice comes near
To speak a gentle word:
And the eye that watches through the door
Is pitiless and hard:
And by all forgot, we rot and rot,
With soul and body marred.

And thus we rust Life's iron chain,
Degraded and alone:
And some men curse, and some men weep,
And some men make no moan:
But God's eternal Laws are kind
And break the heart of stone.

And every human heart that breaks,
In prison-cell or yard,
Is as that broken box that gave
Its treasure to the Lord,
And fill the unclean leper's house
With the scent of costliest nard.

OSCAR WILDE

Ah! happy they whose hearts can break
And peace of pardon win!
How else may man make straight his plan
And cleanse his soul from Sin?
How else but through a broken heart
May Lord Christ enter in?

And he of the swollen purple throat,
And the stark and staring eyes,
Waits for the holy hands that took
The Thief to Paradise;
And a broken and a contrite heart
The Lord will not despise.

The man in red who reads the Law
Gave him three weeks of life,
Three little weeks in which to heal
His soul of his soul's strife,
And cleanse from every blot of blood
The hand that held the knife.

And with tears of blood he cleansed the hand,
The hand that held the steel:
For only blood can wipe out blood,
And only tears can heal:
And the crimson stain that was of Cain
Became Christ's snow-white seal.

VI

In Reading gaol by Reading town
There is a pit of shame,
And in it lies a wretched man
Eaten by teeth of flame,

OSCAR WILDE

In a burning winding-sheet he lies
And his grave has got no name.

And there, till Christ call forth the dead,
In silence let him lie:
No need to waste the foolish tear,
Or heave the windy sigh:
The man had killed the thing he loved,
And so he had to die.

And all men kill the thing they love,
By all let this be heard;
Some do it with a bitter look,
Some with a flattering word,
The coward does it with a kiss,
The brave man with a sword!

On the Recent Sale by Auction of Keats' Love Letters

THESE are the letters which Endymion wrote
To one he loved in secret and apart,
And now the brawlers of the auction mart
Bargain and bid for each poor blotted note,
Aye! for each separate pulse of passion quote
The merchant's price. I think they love not art
Who break the crystal of a poet's heart
That small and sickly eyes may glare and gloat.

Is it not said that many years ago,
In a far Eastern town, some soldiers ran
With torches through the midnight, and began
To wrangle for mean raiment, and to throw

OSCAR WILDE

Dice for the garments of a wretched man.
Not knowing the God's wonder, or His woe.

Theocritus

O SINGER of Persephone!
In the dim meadows desolate
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still through the ivy flits the bee
Where Amaryllis lies in state;
O singer of Persephone!

Simætha calls on Hecaté
And hears the wild dogs at the gate;
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Still by the light and laughing sea
Poor Polypheme bemoans his fate;
O singer of Persephone!

And still in boyish rivalry
Young Daphnis challenges his mate;
Dost thou remember Sicily?

Slim Lacon keeps a goat for thee,
For thee the jocund shepherds wait;
O singer of Persephone!
Dost thou remember Sicily?

OSCAR WILDE

Requiescat

TREAD lightly, she is near
Under the snow:
Speak gently, she can hear
The daisies grow.

All her bright golden hair
Tarnished with rust,
She that was young and fair
Fallen to dust.

Lily-like, white as snow,
She hardly knew
She was a woman, so
Sweetly she grew.

Coffin-board, heavy stone,
Lie on her breast:
I vex my heart alone,
She is at rest.

Peace, Peace, she cannot hear
Lyre or sonnet:
All my life's buried here—
Heap earth upon it.

To Milton

This clever sonnet was doubtless suggested by Wordsworth's more powerful one, beginning:

"Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour";

and containing the fine lines:

"Thy soul was like a star and dwelt apart:

Thou hadst a voice whose sound was like the sea."

MILTON, I think thy spirit has passed away
From these white cliffs and big embattled towers:

This gorgeous fiery-colored world of ours

Seems fallen into ashes dull and gray,

And the age changed into a mimic play

Wherein we waste our else too-crowded hours:

For all our pomp and pageantry of powers

We are but fit to delve the common clay,

Seeing this little isle on which we stand,

This England, this sea-lion of the sea,

By ignorant demagogues are held in fee,

Who love her not. Dear God, is this the land

Which bare a triple empire in her hand

When Cromwell spake the word Democracy?

WILLIAM SHARP (FIONA MACLEOD)

SCOTLAND, 1856—1905

IN 1893 William Sharp began writing mystical prose and verse under the pen-name of Fiona MacLeod, and cleverly concealed his identity, going the length of supplying a fictitious biography of the mythical lady to *Who's Who*, and corresponding, through his sister, with her admirers. It is a remarkable case of dual personality.

There are perhaps too many flying vapors in his poetry. In his nature poems, he is chiefly a word-painter: he is Heinesque, rather than Wordsworthian. He seems to have all the artillery of poetry, but seldom has the power to create the illuminating flash. The poems that follow were found only after a long search.

The Wasp

WHERE the ripe pears droop heavily
The yellow wasp hums loud and long
His hot and drowsy autumn song:
A yellow flame he seems to be,
When darting suddenly from high
He lights where fallen peaches lie:

Yellow and black, this tiny thing's
A tiger-soul on elfin wings.

WILLIAM SHARP

Empire (Persepolis)

THE yellow waste of yellow sands,
The bronze haze of a scorching sky!
Lo, what are these that broken lie;
Were these once temples made with hands?
Once towers and palaces that knew
No hint of that which one day threw

Their greatness to the winds—made this
The memory of Persepolis?

The Tryst of Queen Hynde

QUEEN HYNDE was in the rowan-wood with
scarlet fruit aflame:
Her face was as the berries were, one sun-hot wave of
shame.
With scythes of fire the August sun mowed down vast
swathes of shade;
With blazing eyes the waiting Queen stared on her steel-
blue blade.
“What, thirsty hound,” she muttered low, “with thirst
you flash and gleam:
Bide, bide a wee, my bonnie hound, I’ll show ye soon a
stream!”

The sun had tossed against the West his broken scythes
of fire
When Lord Gillanders bowed before his Queen and
Sweet Desire.
She did not give him smile or kiss; her hand she did not
give.

WILLIAM SHARP

"But are ye come for death," she said, "or are ye come to live?"

Gillanders reined and looked at her: "Hynde, Queen and Love," he said.

"I wooed in love, I come in love, to this the tryst we made.

Why are your eyes so fierce and wild? Why is your face so white?

I love you, Love, with all my love," he said, "by day and night."

"What o' the word that's come to me, of how my lord's to wed

The lily-white maid c' one that has a gold crown on his head?

What o' the word that yesternight ye wantoned with my name,

And on a windy scorn let loose the blown leaf o' my shame?"

The Lord Gillanders looked at her, and never a word said he,

But sprang from off his swift black horse and sank upon his knee.

"This is my love," said white Queen Hynde, "and this, and this, and this—"

Four times she stabbed him to the heart while she his lips did kiss.

She left him in the darkling wood; and as she rose she sang

(The little notes swirled out in air amid the horse-hoof clang):

"My love was sweet, was sweet, was sweet, but not so sweet as now.

A deep long sleep my sweet love has beneath the rowan-bough."

WILLIAM SHARP

They let her in, they lifted swords, his head each one
did bare;
Slowly she bowed, slowly she passed, slowly she clomb
the stair.
Her little son she lifted up, and whispered 'neath his
cries:
"The old King's son, they say; mayhap, he has Gil-
landers' eyes."

Susurro

BREATH o' the grass,
Ripple of wandering wind,
Murmur of tremulous leaves:
A moonbeam moving white
Like a ghost across the plain:
A shadow on the road;
And high up, high,
From the cypress bough
A long sweet melancholy note.
Silence.
And the topmast spray
Of the cypress-bough is still
As a wavelet in a pool;
The road lies duskily bare:
The plain is a misty gloom:
Still are the tremulous leaves;
Scarce a last ripple of wind,
Scarce a breath i' the grass.
Hush! the tired wind sleeps:
Is it the wind's breath, or
Breath o' the grass?

WILLIAM SHARP

The Vision

IN a fair place
Of whin and grass,
I heard feet pass
Where no one was.

I saw a face
Bloom like a flower—
Nay, as the rainbow-shower
Of a tempestuous hour.

It was not man, or woman:
It was not human:
But, beautiful and wild,
Terribly undefiled,
I knew an unborn child.

MARGARET L. WOODS
ENGLAND, 1856—

To the Forgotten Dead

TO the forgotten dead,
Come, let us drink in silence ere we part,
To every fervent yet resolvèd heart
That brought its tameless passion and its tears,
Renunciation and laborious years,
To lay the deep foundations of our race,
To rear its mighty ramparts overhead
And light its pinnacles with golden grace—
To the unhonored dead.

MARGARET L. WOODS

To the forgotten dead,
Whose dauntless hands were stretched to grasp the rein
Of Fate and hurl into the void again
Her thunder-hoofèd horses, rushing blind
Earthward along the courses of the wind.
Among the stars along the wind in vain
Their souls were scattered and their blood was shed,
And nothing, nothing of them doth remain—
To the thrice-perished dead.

JOHN DAVIDSON

SCOTLAND, 1857—1909

THIS Scottish poet, whom Zangwill characterized as "a great man", in contrast to another distinguished contemporary poet, who was "a great manner", migrated from Scotland to London in 1890 to pursue a literary career. Threatened with cancer, he drowned himself in a fit of depression, by leaping from a cliff near Penzance, England. In accordance with his instructions, his body, on being recovered, was buried at sea. He was distinguished equally as a playwright, as a novelist, as a lyric poet and as a maker of ballads.

Davidson has power in his pages, also an occasional weakness. He sinks at times into the raw conceits of Crashaw and "the metaphysical school", as when he pictures the sun and the cloud playing at blind-man's buff, where the sun claimed

"Forfeit on forfeit as he pressed
The mountains to his burning breast."

Nothing of course could be worse than a fall into this sort of incongruity. A writer must never lose the sense of the fitness of things.

But when Davidson soars into the true beauty, our hearts go with him. In these upward flights, he obeys the Miltonic law, and is "simple, sensuous and passionate." In such moments, says Richard LeGallienne, we find in him "lovely and startling lines scattered lavishly all about, carelessly as in nature's fashion in the lanes—lines with the inevitableness of flowers—those simple phrases that seem to have been said from and for eternity. How thrillingly direct is this fine image of Shakespeare—

'I hear the laughing, singing voice
Of Shakespeare warming England through?'

JOHN DAVIDSON

It is more like a fact than a metaphor. Again, how much is said in these four lines—

‘The present is a dungeon dark
Of social problems. Break the gaol!
Get out into the splendid Past,
Or bid the splendid Future hail.’

‘The splendid Past’ or ‘the splendid Future’—there is the only choice for the artist, now and always.”

Davidson is always seeing England’s greatness darkened by England’s social agony. So he is always asking difficult and anxious questions. Are the prevailing notions about life defensible? Have men any keen sense of justice? He is, like Pope, a philosopher in verse; but, unlike that earlier poet in the pulpit, he comes into closer grip with life and its grim realities. He is more moralist than psychologist; and his moral passion has in it a note of hopeless fatalism, as in the lines:

“It has been said, ‘Ye must be born again’:
I say to you, Men must be that they are.”

He holds stoutly that many conventional fetters must be broken in order that men may be set free to develop personality. Many of the old traditions of thought and all the oppressions of capitalism—he says—must be thrown off in order that men may rise into their higher manhood. His philosophy is an intense romanticism, combining social radicalism with moral earnestness. Aldous Huxley (nephew of the great scientist) said recently that Davidson’s ideal man “would have a touch of the muscular Christian in him.”

Davidson was a somber soul: he felt life to be a fever, an incurable disaster. He never found his way to a philosophy that looks down on life courageously from an upper level. But let it be said to his eternal honor that he was always alive with a noble sympathy for the men and women of labor and sorrow. He never forgot the pain and pathos of their struggle.

JOHN DAVIDSON

Spring Song

ABOUT the flowerless land adventurous bees
Pickeering hum; the rooks debate, divide,
With many a hoarse aside,
In solemn conclave on the budding trees;
Larks in the skies and ploughboys o'er the leas
Carol as if the winter ne'er had been;
The very owl comes out to greet the sun;
Rivers high-hearted run;
And hedges mantle with a flush of green.

The curlew calls me where the salt winds blow;
His troubled note dwells mournfully and dies;
Then the long echo cries
Deep in my heart. Ah, surely I must go!
For there the tides, moon-haunted, ebb and flow;
And there the seaboard murmurs resonant;
The waves their interwoven fugue repeat
And brooding surges beat
A slow, melodious, continual chant.

JOHN DAVIDSON

Song

THE boat is chafing at our long delay,
And we must leave too soon
The spicy sea-pinks and the inborne spray,
The tawny sands, the moon.

Keep us, O Thetis, in our western flight!
Watch from thy pearly throne
Our vessel, plunging deeper into night
To reach each a land unknown.

A Northern Suburb

NATURE selects the longest way,
And winds about in tortuous grooves:
A thousand years the oaks decay,
The wrinkled glacier hardly moves.

But here the whetted fangs of change
Daily devour the old demesne—
The busy farm, the quiet grange,
The wayside inn, the village green.

In gaudy yellow brick and red,
With rooting pipes, like creepers rank,
The shoddy terraces o'erspread
Meadow and garth and daisied bank.

With shelves for rooms the houses crowd,
Like draughty cupboards in a row—
Ice-chests when wintry winds are loud,
Ovens when summer breezes blow.

JOHN DAVIDSON

Roused by the fee'd policeman's knock,
And sad that day should come again,
Under the stars the workmen flock
In haste to reach the workmen's train.

For here dwell those who must fulfil
Dull tasks in uncongenial spheres,
Who toil through dread of coming ill,
And not with hope of happier years—

The lowly folk who scarcely dare
Conceive themselves perhaps misplaced,
Whose prize for unremitting care
Is only not to be disgraced.

From "St. George's Day"

In this eclogue we get again the high theme that fascinated Davidson's genius—England's greatness side by side with England's social misery.

I CANNOT see the stars and flowers,
Nor hear the lark's soprano ring,
Because a ruddy darkness lowers
For ever, and the tempests sing.
I see the strong coerce the weak,
And labor overwrought rebel;
I hear the useless treadmill creek,
The prisoner, cursing in his cell;
I see the loafer-burnished wall;
I hear the rotting match-girl whine;
I see the unslept switchman fall;
I hear the explosion in the mine. . . .
I see along the heedless street

JOHN DAVIDSON

The sandwichmen trudge through the mire;
I hear the tired quick-tripping feet
Of sad, gay girls who ply for hire.

* * * * *

The glowing blast, the fire-shot smoke
Where guns are forged and armor plate,
The mammoth hammer's pounding stroke,
The din of our dread iron date.
And always divers undertones
Within the roaring tempest throb—
The chink of gold, the laborer's groans,
The infant's wail, the woman's sob.
Hoarsely they beg of Fate to give
A little lightening of their woe,
A little time to love, to live,
A little time to think and know.
I see where from the slums may rise
Some unexpected dreadful dawn—
The gleam of steeled and scowling eyes,
A flash of women's faces wan.

Piper, Play!

NOW the furnaces are out,
And the aching anvils sleep:
Down the road the grimy rout
Tramples homeward twenty deep.
Piper, play! Piper, play!
Though we be o'erlabored men,
Ripe for rest, pipe your best!
Let us foot it once again!

JOHN DAVIDSON

Bridled looms delay their din;
All the humming wheels are spent;
Busy spindles cease to spin;
Warp and woof must rest content.
Piper, play! Piper, play!
For a little we are free!
Foot it girls and shake your curls,
Haggard creatures though we be!

Racked and soiled the faded air
Freshens in our holiday;
Clouds and tides our respite share;
Breezes linger by the way.
Piper, rest! Piper, rest!
Now, a carol of the moon!
Piper, piper, play your best,
Melt the sun into your tune!

We are of the humblest grade;
Yet we dare to dance our fill:
Male and female were we made—
Fathers, mothers, lovers still!
Piper—softly; soft and low;
Pipe of love in mellow notes,
Till the tears begin to flow,
And our hearts are in our throats!

Nameless as the stars of night
Far in galaxies unfurled,
Yet we wield unrivalled might,
Joints and hinges of the world!
Night and day! night and day!
Sound the song the hours rehearse!
Work and play! work and play!
The order of the universe!

JOHN DAVIDSON

Now the furnaces are out,
And the aching anvils sleep;
Down the road a merry rout
Dances homeward twenty deep.
Piper, play! Piper, play!
Wearied people though we be,
Ripe for rest, pipe your best!
For a little we are free!

A Ballad of a Nun

FROM Eastertide to Eastertide
For ten long years her patient knees
Engraved the stones—the fittest bride
Of Christ in all the diocese.

She conquered every earthly lust;
The abbess loved her more and more;
And, as mark of perfect trust,
Made her the keeper of the door.

High on a hill the convent hung,
Across a duchy looking down,
Where everlasting mountains flung
Their shadows over tower and town.

The jewels of their lofty snows
In constellations flashed at night;
Above their crests the moon arose;
The deep earth shuddered with delight.

Long ere she left her cloudy bed,
Still dreaming in the orient land,

JOHN DAVIDSON

On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

The adventurous sun took Heaven by storm;
Clouds scattered largesses of rain;
The sounding cities, rich and warm,
Smoldered and glittered in the plain.

Sometimes it was a wandering wind,
Sometimes the fragrance of the pine,
Sometimes the thought how others sinned,
That turned her sweet blood into wine.

Sometimes she heard a serenade
Complaining sweetly far away:
She said, "A young man woos a maid,"
And dreamt of love till break of day.

Then would she ply her knotted scourge
Until she swooned; but evermore
She had the same red sin to purge,
Poor, passionate keeper of the door!

For still night's starry scroll unfurled,
And still the day came like a flood:
It was the greatness of the world
That made her long to use her blood.

In winter-time when Lent drew nigh,
And hill and plain were wrapped in snow,
She watched beneath the frosty sky
The nearest city nightly glow.

Like peals of airy bells outworn
Faint laughter died above her head

JOHN DAVIDSON

In gusts of broken music borne:
"They keep the Carnival," she said.

Her hungry heart devoured the town:
"Heaven save me by a miracle!
Unless God sends an angel down,
Thither I go though it were Hell."

She dug her nails deep in her breast,
Sobbed, shrieked, and straight withdrew the bar:
A fledgling flying from the nest,
A pale moth rushing to a star.

Fillet and veil in strips she tore;
Her golden tresses floated wide;
The ring and bracelet that she wore
As Christ's betrothed, she cast aside.

"Life's dearest meaning I shall probe;
Lo! I shall taste of love at last!
Away!" She doffed her outer robe,
And sent it sailing down the blast.

Her body seemed to warm the wind;
With bleeding feet o'er ice she ran:
"I leave the righteous God behind;
I go to worship sinful man."

She reached the sounding city's gate,
No question did the warder ask:
He passed her in: "Welcome, wild mate!"
He thought her some fantastic mask.

Half-naked through the town she went;
Each footstep left a bloody mark;

JOHN DAVIDSON

Crowds followed her with looks intent;
Her bright eyes made the torches dark.

Alone and watching in the street
There stood a grave youth nobly dressed:
To him she knelt and kissed his feet;
Her face her great desire confessed.

Straight to his house the nun he led:
"Strange lady, what would you with me?"
"Your love, your love, sweet lord," she said;
"I bring you my virginity."

He healed her bosom with a kiss;
She gave him all her passion's hoard;
And sobbed and murmured ever, "This
Is life's great meaning, dear, my lord.

"I care not for my broken vow;
Though God should come in thunder soon,
I am sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the sun and moon."

Through all the towns of Belmarie
She made a progress like a queen.
"She is," they said, "whatever she be,
The strangest woman ever seen.

"From fairyland she must have come,
Or else she is a mermaiden."
Some said she was a ghoul, and some
A heathen goddess born again.

But soon her fire to ashes burned;
Her beauty changed to haggardness;

JOHN DAVIDSON

Her golden hair to silver turned;
The hour came of her last caress.

At midnight from her lonely bed
She rose, and said, "I have had my will."
The old ragged robe she donned, and fled
Back to the convent on the hill.

Half-naked as she went before,
She hurried to the city wall,
Unnoticed in the rush and roar
And splendor of the carnival.

No question did the warder ask:
Her ragged robe, her shrunken limb,
Her dreadful eyes! "It is no mask;
It is a she-wolf, gaunt and grim!"

She ran across the icy plain;
Her worn blood curdled in the blast;
Each footstep left a crimson stain;
The white-faced moon looked on aghast.

She said between her chattering jaws,
"Deep peace is mine, I cease to strive;
Oh, comfortable convent laws,
That bury foolish nuns alive!

"A trowel for my passing-bell,
A little bed within the wall,
A coverlet of stones; how well
I there shall keep the Carnival!"

Like tired bells chiming in their sleep,
The wind faint peals of laughter bore:

JOHN DAVIDSON

She stopped her ears and climbed the steep,
And thundered at the convent door.

It opened straight; she entered in,
And at the wardress' feet fell prone:
"I come to purge away my sin;
Bury me, close me up in stone."

The wardress raised her tenderly;
She touched her wet and fast-shut eyes:
"Look, sister; sister, look at me;
Look, can you see through my disguise?"

She looked and saw her own sad face,
And trembled, wondering, "Who art thou?"
"God sent me down to fill your place:
I am the Virgin Mary now."

And with the word, God's mother shone:
The wanderer whispered, "Mary, hail!"
The vision helped her to put on
Bracelet and fillet, ring and veil.

"You are sister to the mountains now,
And sister to the day and night;
Sister to God." And on the brow
She kissed her thrice, and left her sight.

While dreaming in her cloudy bed,
Far in the crimson orient land,
On many a mountain's happy head
Dawn lightly laid her rosy hand.

JOHN DAVIDSON

A Ballad of Heaven

HE wrought at one great work for years;
The world passed by with lofty look:
Sometimes his eyes were dashed with tears;
Sometimes his lips with laughter shook.

His wife and child went clothed in rags,
And in a windy garret starved:
He trod his measures on the flags,
And high in heaven his music carved.

Wistful he grew, but never feared;
For always on the midnight skies
His rich orchestral score appeared
In stars and zones and galaxies.

He thought to copy down his score;
The moonlight was his lamp. He said,
"Listen, my Love"; but on the floor
His wife and child were lying dead.

Her hollow eyes were open wide;
He deemed she heard with special zest:
Her death's-head infant coldly eyed
The desert of her shrunken breast.

"Listen, my Love, my work is done:
I tremble as I touch the page
To sign the sentence of the sun,
And crown the great eternal age.

"The slow *adagio* begins:
The winding-sheets are ravelled out

JOHN DAVIDSON

That swathe the minds of men, the sins
That wrap their rotting souls about.

"The dead are heralded along
With silver trumps and golden drums,
And flutes and oboes, keen and strong;
My brave *andante* singing comes.

"Then like a python's sumptuous dress
The frame of things is cast away,
And out of Time's obscure distress,
The thundering *scherzo* crashes Day.

"For three great orchestras I hope
My mighty music shall be scored:
On three high hills they shall have scope
With Heaven's vault for a sounding-board.

"Sleep well, Love, let your eyelids fall;
Cover the child; good-night, and if—
What? Speak . . . the traitorous end of all
Both . . . cold and hungry . . . cold and stiff!

"But no, God means us well, I trust.
Dear ones, be happy, hope is nigh:
We are too young to fall to dust,
And too unsatisfied to die."

He lifted up against his breast
The woman's body, stark and wan;
And to her withered bosom pressed
The little skin-clad skeleton.

"You see you are alive," he cried.
He rocked them gently to and fro.

JOHN DAVIDSON

"No, no, my Love, you have not died,
Nor you, my little fellow; no."

Long in his arms he strained his dead,
And crooned an antique lullaby;
Then laid them on the lowly bed,
And broke down with a doleful cry.

"The love, the hope, the blood, the brain,
Of her and me, the budding life,
And my great music—all in vain!
My unscored work, my child, my wife!

"We drop into oblivion,
And nourish some suburban sod:
My work, this woman, this my son
Are now no more: there is no God.

"The world's a dustbin; we are due,
And death's cart waits: be life accurst!"
He stumbled down besides the two,
And clasping them, his great heart burst.

Straightway he stood at Heaven's gate,
Abashed and trembling for his sin:
I trow he had not long to wait,
For God came out and led him in.

And then there ran a radiant pair,
Ruddy with haste and eager-eyed,
To meet him first upon the stair—
His wife and child beatified.

They clad him in a robe of light,
And gave him heavenly food to eat;

JOHN DAVIDSON

Great seraphs praised him to the height,
Archangels sat about his feet.

God, smiling, took him by the hand,
And led him to the brink of Heaven:
He saw where systems whirling stand,
Where galaxies like snow are driven.

Dead silence reigned; a shudder ran
Through space; Time furled his wearied wings;
A slow *adagio* then began,
Sweetly resolving troubled things.

The dead were heralded along:
As if with drums and trumps of flame,
And flutes and oboes keen and strong,
A brave *andante* singing came.

Then like a python's sumptuous dress,
The frame of things was cast away;
And out of Time's obscure distress
The conquering *scherzo* thundered Day.

He doubted; but God said, "Even so:
Nothing is lost that's wrought with tears.
The music that you made below
Is now the music of the spheres."

JOHN DAVIDSON

Man as God

FROM "A BALLAD IN BLANK VERSE"

HOW vain! he cried. A God? a mole, a worm!
An engine frail, of brittle bones conjoined;
With tissue packed; with nerves, transmitting force;
And driven by water, thick and colored red:
That may for some few pence a day be hired
In thousands to be shot at! Oh, a God
That lies and steals and murders! Such a God
Passionate, dissolute, incontinent!
A God that starves in thousands, and ashamed,
Or shameless in the workhouse lurks; that sweats
In mines and foundries! An enchanted God,
Whose nostrils in a palace breathe perfume,
Whose cracking shoulders hold the palace up,
Whose shoeless feet are rotting in the mire!

Holiday at Hampton Court

GAFFERS, gammers, huzzies, louts,
Couples, gangs, and families
Sprawling, shake, with Babel-shouts
Bluff King Hal's funereal trees;
And eddyng groups of stare-about
Quiz the sandstone Hercules.

When their tongues and tempers tire,
Harry and his little lot
Condescendingly admire
Lozenge-bed and crescent-plot,
Aglow with links of azure fire,
Pansy and forget-me-not.

JOHN DAVIDSON

Where the emerald shadows rest
In the lofty woodland aisle,
Chafing lovers quaintly dressed
Chase and double many a mile,
Indifferent exiles in the west
Making love in cockney style.

Now the echoing palace fills;
Men and women, girls and boys
Trample past the swords and frills,
Kings and Queens and trulls and toys;
Or listening loll on window-sills,
Happy amateurs of noise!

Voices from the river call;
Organs hammer tune on tune;
Larks triumphant over all
Herald twilight coming soon,
For as the sun begins to fall
Near the Zenith gleams the moon.

WILLIAM WATSON

ENGLAND, 1858—

WATSON'S work, as represented by ten volumes of poetry since the appearance of *The Prince's Quest and Other Poems* (1880), is carefully wrought, reflective in tone and marked by an air of distinction. He was prominently mentioned among the possible successors of Tennyson and Alfred Austin in the English laureateship; but the honor went elsewhere, owing, it is said, to Government objection to some of his political poems. However, in 1917, he received the order of Knighthood.

In all of William Watson's poems, we feel the presence of weight, the weight of character, the weight of a reasoned purpose in life. Let it be said to his eternal honor that he has made a manly effort to resist the dissolving forces of the decadents, and has ever turned with hope to the clear-eyed moral reason of Wordsworth. He says with justice:

"I have not paid the world
The evil and the insolent courtesy,
Of offering it my baseness as a gift."

We never find in this distinguished poet the weak artifices and crooked conceits of the mere rhymers; but we do find in him a seasoned substance of thought and a fine chastity of form. We hear in his carefully molded lines some of "the large utterance" of the early poets, who made the old ages melodious and immortal. He has the gift of reticence; and if any man of our century has the grand style, that man is William Watson. Every theme he touches is made suddenly to wear a new dignity: he gives us a glimpse of that supernal beauty that elevates the soul—the supernal beauty that is great poetry.

WILLIAM WATSON

Song

APRIL, April,
Laugh thy girlish laughter;
Then, the moment after,
Weep thy girlish tears!
April, that mine ears
Like a lover greetest,
If I tell thee, sweetest,
All my hopes and fears,
April, April,
Laugh thy golden laughter,
But, the moment after,
Weep thy golden tears!

Ode in May

Observe here that the poet has written a Spring song, a thing that has been written a thousand time before. But this master does not pause in the conventional idea: he passes easily and nobly from the youth of the year to its immense implications—passes on indeed to some of the deeper problems of the thinking heart of man.

LET me go forth, and share
The overflowing sun
With one wise friend, or one
Better than wise, being fair,
Where the pewit wheels and dips
On heights of bracken and ling,
And Earth, unto her leaflet tips,
Tingles with the Spring.

WILLIAM WATSON

What is so sweet and dear
As a prosperous morn in May,
The confident prime of the day,
And the dauntless youth of the year,
When nothing that asks for bliss,
Asking aright, is denied,
And half of the world a bridegroom is,
And half of the world a bride?

The Song of Mingling flows,
Grave, ceremonial, pure,
As once, from lips that endure,
The cosmic descant rose,
When the temporal lord of life,
Going his golden way,
Had taken a wondrous maid to wife
That long had said him nay.

For of old the Sun, our sire,
Came wooing the mother of men,
Earth, that was virginal then,
Vestal fire to his fire.
Silent her bosom and coy,
But the strong god sued and pressed;
And born of their starry nuptial joy
Are all that drink of her breast.

And the triumph of him that begot,
And the travail of her that bore,
Behold they are evermore
As warp and weft in our lot.
We are children of splendor and flame,
Of shuddering, also, and tears.
Magnificent out of the dust we came,
And abject from the Spheres.

WILLIAM WATSON

O bright irresistible lord!

We are fruit of Earth's womb, each one;
And fruit of thy loins, O Sun,
Whence first was the seed outpoured.
To thee as our Father we bow,
Forbidden thy Father to see,
Who is older and greater than thou, as thou
Are greater and older than we.

Thou art but as a word of his speech;
Thou art but as a wave of his hand;
Thou art brief as a glitter of sand
'Twixt tide and tide on his beach,
Thou art less than a spark of his fire,
Or a moment's mood of his soul:
Thou art lost in the notes on the lips of his choir
That chant the chant of the Whole.

The Sovereign Poet

HE sits above the clang and dust of Time,
With the world's secret trembling on his lip:
He asks not converse nor companionship
In the cold starlight where thou canst not climb.

The undelivered tidings in his breast
Suffer him not to rest.
He sees afar the immemorable throng,
And binds the scattered ages with a song.

The glorious riddle of his rhythmic breath,
His might, his spell, we know not what they be:
We only feel whate'er he uttereth,

WILLIAM WATSON

This savors not of death,
This hath a relish of eternity.

World-Strangeness

STRANGE the world about me lies,
Never yet familiar grown—
Still disturbs me with surprise,
Haunts me like a face half known.

In this house with starry dome,
Floored with gemlike plains and seas,
Shall I never feel at home,
Never wholly be at ease?

On from room to room I stray,
Yet my host can ne'er espy,
And I know not to this day
Whether guest or captive I.

So, between the starry dome
And the floor of plains and seas,
I have never felt at home,
Never wholly been at ease.

Epigram

MOMENTOUS to himself as I to me
Hath each man been that ever woman bore;
Once, in a lightning-flash of sympathy,
I *felt* this truth an instant, and no more.

History

DARKLY, as by some gloomèd mirror glassed,
 Herein at times the brooding eye beholds
 The great scarred visage of the pompous Past,
 But oftener only the embroidered folds
 And soiled regality of his rent robe,
 Whose tattered skirts are ruined dynasties
 And cumber with their trailing pride the globe,
 And sweep the dusty ages in our eyes;

Till the world seems a world of husks and bones
 Where sightless seers and immortals dead,
 Kings that remember not their awful thrones,
 Invincible armies long since vanquishèd,
 And powerless potentates and foolish sages
 Lie 'mid the crumbling of the mossy ages.

The Turk in Armenia

Here are two powerful sonnets from "The Purple East", the most significant sonnet sequence written in modern times. This is one of the cases where the poet has used his great gift to espouse a world cause—the defense of the Armenians from the black villainies of the Turks. In his hand, the sonnet "became a trumpet" as once it became a thunder of righteousness in the impassioned hand of Milton. Perhaps I may be pardoned for quoting here my quatrain to William Watson, after reading "The Purple East":

*That hour you put the wreath of England by
 To shake her guilty heart with song sublime,
 The mighty Muse that watches from the sky
 Laid on your head the larger wreath of Time.*

WILLIAM WATSON

WHAT profits it, O England, to prevail
In camp and mart and council, and bestrew
With sovereign argosies the subject blue
And wrest thy tribute from each golden gale,
If, in thy strongholds, thou canst hear the wail
Of maidens martyred by the turbaned crew
Whose tenderest mercy was the sword that slew,
And lift no hand to wield the purging flail?

We deemed of old thou held'st a charge from Him,
Who watches girdled by His seraphim,
To smite the wronger with thy destined rod.
Wait'st thou His sign? Enough, the sleepless cry
Of virgin souls for vengeance, and on high
The gathering blackness of the frown of God!

To the Sultan

CALIPH, I did thee wrong. I hailed thee late
"Abdul the Damned," and would recall my word.
It merged thee with the unillustrious herd
Who crowd the approaches to the infernal gate—
Spirits gregarious, equal in their state
As is the innumerable ocean bird,
Gannet or gull, whose wandering plaint is heard
On Ailsa or Iona desolate.

For, in a world where cruel deeds abound,
The merely damned are legion: with such souls
Is not each hollow and cranny of Tophet crammed?
Thou, with the brightest of Hell's aureoles
Dost shine supreme, incomparably crowned,
Immortally, beyond all mortals, damned.

Wordsworth's Grave

I

THE old rude church, with bare, bald tower, is here;
Beneath its shadow high-born Rotha flows;
Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near,
And with cool murmur lulling his repose.

Rotha, remembering well who slumbers near.
His hills, his lakes, his streams are with him yet.
Surely the heart that read her own heart clear
Nature forgets not soon: 'tis we forget.

We that with vagrant soul his fixity
Have slighted; faithless, done his deep faith wrong;
Left him for poorer loves, and bowed the knee
To misbegotten strange new gods of song.

Yet, led by hollow ghost or beckoning elf
Far from her homestead to the desert bourn,
The vagrant soul returning to herself
Wearily wise, must needs to him return.

To him and to the powers that with him dwell—
Inflowings that divulged not whence they came;
And that secluded spirit unknowable,
The mystery we make darker with a name;

The Somewhat which we name but cannot know,
Even as we name a star and only see
His quenchless flashings forth, which ever show
And ever hide him, and which are not he.

WILLIAM WATSON

II

Poet who sleepest by this wandering wave!

When thou wast born, what birth-gift hadst thou
then?

To thee what wealth was that the Immortals gave,
The wealth thou gavest in thy turn to men?

Not Milton's keen, translunar music thine;

Not Shakespeare's cloudless, boundless human view;

Not Shelley's flush of rose on peaks divine;

Nor yet the wizard twilight Coleridge knew.

What hadst thou that could make so large amends

For all thou hadst not and thy peers possessed,

Motion and fire, swift means to radiant ends?

Thou hadst, for weary feet, the gift of rest.

From Shelley's dazzling glow or thunderous haze,

From Byron's tempest-anger, tempest-mirth,

Men turned to thee and found—not blast and blaze,

Tumult of tottering heavens, but peace on earth.

Nor peace that grows by Lethe, scentless flower,

There in white languors to decline and cease;

But Peace whose names are also rapture, power,

Clear sight, and love; for these are parts of peace.

III

I hear it vouched the Muse is with us still—

If less divinely frenzied than of yore,

In lieu of feelings she has wondrous skill

To simulate emotion felt no more.

WILLIAM WATSON

Not such the authentic Presence pure, that made
This valley vocal in the great days gone—
In his great days, while yet the spring-time played
About him, and the mighty morning shone.

No word-mosaic artificer, he sang
A lofty song of lowly weal and dole.
Right from the heart, right to the heart it sprang;
Or from the soul leapt instant to the soul.

He felt the charm of childhood, grace of youth,
Grandeur of age, insisting to be sung.
The impassioned argument was simple truth,
Half wondering at its own melodious tongue.

Impassioned? ay, to the song's ecstatic core!
But far removed were clangor, storm and feud;
For plenteous health was his, exceeding store
Of joy, and an impassioned quietude.

IV

A hundred years ere he to manhood came,
Song from celestial heights had wandered down,
Put off her robe of sunlight, dew and flame,
And donned a modish dress to charm the Town.

Thenceforth she but festooned the porch of things;
Apt at life's lore, incurious what life meant.
Dextrous of hand, she struck her lute's few strings;
Ignobly perfect, barrenly content.

Unflushed with ardor and unblanched with awe,
Her lips in profitless derision curled:

WILLIAM WATSON

She saw with dull emotion—if she saw—
The vision of the glory of the world.

The human masque she watched, with dreamless eyes
In whose clear shallows lurked no trembling shade:
The stars, unkennd by her, might set and rise;
Unmarked by her, the daisies bloom and fade.

The age grew sated with her sterile wit:
Herself waxed weary on her loveless throne.
Men felt life's tide, the sweep and surge of it,
And craved a living voice, a natural tone.

For none the less, though song was but half true,
The world lay common, one abounding theme:
Man joyed and wept, and fate was ever new,
And love was sweet, life real, death no dream.

In sad stern verse the rugged scholar-sage
Bemoaned his toil unvalued, youth uncheered.
His numbers wore the vesture of the age,
But, 'neath it beating, the great heart was heard.

From dewy pastures, uplands sweet with thyme,
A virgin breeze freshened the jaded day.
It wafted Collins' lonely vesper-chime,
It breathed abroad the frugal note of Gray.

It fluttered here and there, nor swept in vain
The dusty haunts where futile echoes dwell—
Then, in a cadence soft as summer rain,
And sad from Auburn voiceless, drooped and fell.

It drooped and fell, and one 'neath northern skies,
With southern heart, who tilled his father's field,

WILLIAM WATSON

Found Poesy a-dying, bade her rise
And touch quick Nature's hem and go forth healed.

On life's broad plain the ploughman's conquering share
Upturned the fallow lands of truth anew;
And over the formal garden's trim parterre
The peasant's team a ruthless furrow drew.

Bright was his going forth, but clouds ere long
Whelmed him; in gloom his radiance set, and those
Twin morning stars of the new century's song,
Those morning stars that sang together, rose.

In elvish speech the Dreamer told his tale
Of marvellous oceans swept by fateful wings—
The Seër strayed not from earth's human pale,
But the mysterious face of common things

He mirrored as the moon in Rydal Mere
Is mirrored, when the breathless night hangs blue:
Strangely remote she seems and wondrous near,
And by some nameless difference born anew.

v

Peace—peace—and rest! Ah, how the lyre is loth,
Or powerless now, to give what all men seek!
Either it deadens with ignoble sloth
Or deafens with shrill tumult, loudly weak.

Where is the singer whose large notes and clear
Can heal and arm and plenish and sustain?
Lo, one with empty music floods the ear,
And one, the heart refreshing, tires the brain.

WILLIAM WATSON

And idly tuneful, the loquacious throng
Flutter and twitter, prodigal of time,
And little masters make a toy of song
Till grave men weary of the sound of rhyme.

And some go pranked in faded antique dress,
Abhorring to be hale and glad and free;
And some parade a conscious naturalness,
The scholar's not the child's simplicity.

Enough—and wisest who from words forbear.
The kindly river rails not as it glides;
And suave and charitable, the winning air
Chides not at all, or only him who chides.

VI

Nature! we storm thine ear with choric notes.
Thou answerest through the calm great nights and
days,
“Laud me who will: not tuneless are your throats,
Yet if ye paused I should not miss the praise.”

We falter, half rebuked, and sing again.
We chant thy desertness and haggard gloom,
Or with thy splendid wrath inflate the strain,
Or touch it with thy color and perfume.

One, his melodious blood aflame for thee,
Wooded with fierce lust, his hot heart world-defiled:
One, with the upward eye of infancy,
Looked in thy face, and felt himself thy child.

Thee he approached without distrust or dread—
Beheld thee throned, an awful queen, above—

WILLIAM WATSON

Climbed to thy lap and merely laid his head
Against thy warm wild heart of mother love.

He heard that vast heart beating—thou didst press
Thy child so close, and lov'dst him unaware.
Thy beauty gladdened him; yet he scarce less
Had loved thee, had he never found thee fair!

For thou wast not as legendary lands
To which with curious eyes and ears we roam.
Nor wast thou as a fane 'mid solemn sands,
Where palmers halt at evening. Thou wast home.

And here, at home, still bides he, but he sleeps;
Not to be wakened even at thy word;
Though we, vague dreamers, dream he somewhere keeps
An ear still open to thy voice still heard—

Thy voice, as heretofore, about him blown,
For ever blown about his silence now;
Thy voice, though deeper, yet so like his own
That almost, when he sang, we deemed 'twas thou!

Behind Helm Crag and Silver Howe the sheen
Of the retreating day is less and less.
Soon will the lordlier summits, here unseen,
Gather the night about their nakedness.

The half-heard bleat of sheep comes from the hill.
Faint sounds of childish play are in the air.
The river murmurs past. All else is still.
The very graves seem stiller than they were.

Afar though nation be on nation hurled,
And life with toil and ancient pain depressed,

WILLIAM WATSON

Here one may scarce believe the whole wide world
Is not at peace, and all man's heart at rest.

Rest! 'twas the gift he gave; and peace! the shade
He spread, for spirits fevered with the sun.
To him his bounties are come back—here laid
In rest, in peace, his labor nobly done.

After Reading "Tamburlaine the Great"

I CLOSE your Marlowe's page, my Shakespeare's ope.
How welcome—after gong and cymbal's din—
The continuity, the long slow slope
And vast curves of the gradual violin!

Shelley and Harriet Westbrook

A GREAT star stooped from heaven and loved a
flower
Grown in earth's garden—loved it for an hour:
Let eyes which trace his orbit in the spheres
Refuse not, to a ruined rosebud, tears.

Shelley's Centenary

AUGUST 4TH, 1892

WITHIN a narrow span of time,
Three princes of the realm of rhyme,
At height of youth or manhood's prime
From earth took wing,
To join the fellowship sublime
Who, dead, yet sing.

WILLIAM WATSON

He, first, his earliest wreath who wove
Of laurel grown in Latmian grove,
Conquered by pain and hapless love
 Found calmer home,
Roofed by the heaven that glows above
 Eternal Rome.

A fierier soul, its own fierce prey,
And cumbered with more mortal clay,
At Missolonghi flamed away,
 And left the air
Reverberating to this day
 Its loud despair.

Alike remote from Byron's scorn
And Keats's magic as of morn
Bursting for ever newly-born
 On forests old,
To wake a hoary world forlorn
 With touch of gold,

Shelley, the cloud-begot, who grew
Nourished on air and sun and dew,
Into that Essence whence he drew
 His life and lyre,
Was fittingly resolved anew
 Through wave and fire.

'Twas like his rapid soul! 'Twas meet
That he, who brooked not Time's slow feet,
With passage thus abrupt and fleet
 Should hurry hence,
Eager the Great Perhaps to greet
 With Why? and Whence?

WILLIAM WATSON

Impatient of the world's fixed way,
He never could suffer God's delay;¹
But all the future in a day
 Would build divine,
And the whole past in ruins lay,
 An emptied shrine.

Vain vision! but the glow, the fire,
The passion of benign desire,
The glorious yearning, lift him higher
 Than many a soul
That mounts a million paces nigher
 Its meaner goal.

And power is his, if naught beside,
In that thin ether where he rides,
Above the roar of human tides
 To ascend afar,
Lost in a storm of light that hides
 His dizzy car.

Below, the unhasting world toils on,
And here and there are victories won,
Some dragon slain, some justice done;
 While, through the skies,
A meteor rushing on the sun,
 He flares and dies.

But, as he cleaves yon ether clear,
Notes from the unattempted Sphere
He scatters to the enchanted ear
 Of Earth's dim throng,

¹ God is not to be charged with delay, for isn't God's delay caused by man's delay?—E. M.

WILLIAM WATSON

Whose dissonance doth more endear
The showering song.

In other shapes than he forecast,
The world is molded: his fierce blast—
His wild assault upon the Past—
These things are vain;
Revolt is transient: what shall last
Is that pure strain,

Which seems the wandering voices blent
Of every virgin element—
A sound from ocean caverns sent—
An airy call
From the pavilioned firmament
O'erdoming all.

And in this world of worldlings, where
Souls rust in apathy, and ne'er
A great emotion shakes the air,
And life flags tame,
And rare is noble impulse, rare
The impassioned aim,

'Tis no mean fortune to have heard
A singer who, if errors blurred
His sight, had yet a spirit stirred
By vast desire,
And ardor fledging the swift word
With plumes of fire.

A creature of impetuous breath,
Our torpor deadlier than death
He knew not; whatsoe'er he saith
Flashes with life:

WILLIAM WATSON

He spurreth men, he quickeneth
To splendid strife.

And in his gusts of song he brings
Wild colors shaken from strange wings,
And unfamiliar whisperings
From far lips blown,
While all the rapturous heart of things
Throbs through his own—

His own that from the burning pyre
One who had loved his wind-swept lyre
Out of the sharp teeth of the fire
Unmolten drew,
Beside the sea that in her ire
Smote him and slew.

The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue

SHE is not old, she is not young,
The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue,
The haggard cheek, the hungering eye,
The poisoned words that wildly fly,
The famished face, the fevered hand—
Who slights the worthiest in the land,
Sneers at the just, contemns the brave,
And blackens goodness in the grave.

In truthful numbers be she sung,
The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue;
Concerning whom, Fame hints at things
Told but in shrugs and whisperings:
Ambitious from her natal hour,
And scheming all her life for power;

WILLIAM WATSON

With little left for seemly pride,
With venom'd fangs she cannot hide,
Who half makes love to you to-day,
To-morrow gives her guest away.
Burnt up within by that strange soul
She cannot slake, nor yet control:
Malignant-lipped, unkind, unsweet;
Past all example indiscreet;
Hectic, and always overstrung—
The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue.
To think that such as she can mar
Names that among the noblest are!
That hands like hers can touch the springs
That move who knows what men and things?
That on her will their fates have hung!—
The Woman with the Serpent's Tongue.

Criticism

THERE were three critics: Slip and Slop
And Slapdash were their names,
And all three said: "Your mission, sir?
Your message? and your aims?"

"Kind gentlemen, to tell the truth,
Nor color fact with fable,
My chief concern is just to write
As well as I am able.

"Mere honest work my mission is,
My message and my aim."
"A man of words," said Slip and Slop;
And Slapdash said the same.

WILLIAM WATSON

From "The Prince's Quest"

Here is a brief passage marked as memorable by Rossetti in his copy of "The Prince's Quest."

ABOUT him was a ruinous fair place,
Which Time, who still delighteth to abase
The highest, and throw down what men do build,
With splendid prideful barrenness had filled,
And dust of immemorial dreams, and breath
Of silence, which is next of kin to death,
A weedy wilderness it seemed, that was
In days forepast a garden, but the grass
Grew now where once the flowers, and hard by
A many-throated fountain had run dry,
Which erst all day a web of rainbows wove
Out of the body of the sun, its love.
And, but a furlong's space beyond, there towered
In midmost of that silent realm deflowered,
A palace, builded of black marble, whence
The shadow of a swart magnificence
Falling, upon the outer place begot
A dream of darkness where the night was not.

A. E. HOUSMAN

ENGLAND, 1859—

AT thirty-seven years of age, Housman knocked on the door of the world, having only a small volume of verse—*A Shropshire Lad*—under his arm. The world read the verses, and gladly opened the door wide. Those poems are darkened by a pervading pessimism, kindred to the darker shadow in Hardy, nearly all of them ending in a death-note and suggesting the futility of all human endeavor. And yet because of a certain haunting sincerity of spirit and charm of expression, they are accepted as a precious possession by all who respond to poems of power. At times we hear in Housman's verses a bright and buoyant note.

With Rue My Heart Is Laden

WITH rue my heart is laden
For golden friends I had,
For many a rose-lipt maiden
And many a lightfoot lad.

By brooks too broad for leaping
The lightfoot boys are laid:
The rose-lipt girls are sleeping
In fields where roses fade.

Loveliest of Trees

LOVELIEST of trees, the cherry now
Is hung with bloom along the bough,
And stands about the woodland ride
Wearing white for Eastertide.

A. E. HOUSMAN

Now, of my threescore years and ten,
Twenty will not come again;
And take from seventy springs a score,
It only leaves me fifty more.

And since to look at things in bloom
Fifty springs are little room,
About the woodlands I will go
To see the cherry hung with snow.

When I Was One-and-Twenty

WHEN I was one-and-twenty
I heard a wise man say,
"Give crowns and pounds and guineas
But not your heart away;
Give pearls away and rubies
But keep your fancy free."
But I was one-and-twenty,
No use to talk to me.

When I was one-and-twenty
I heard him say again,
"The heart out of the bosom
Was never given in vain;
'Tis paid with sighs a-plenty
And sold for endless rue."
And I am two-and-twenty,
And oh, 'tis true, 'tis true!

A. E. HOUSMAN

Reveillé

WAKE: the silver dusk returning
Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
Strands upon the eastern rims.

Wake: the vaulted shadow shatters,
Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Up, lad, up, 'tis late for lying:
Hear the drums of morning play;
Hark, the empty highways crying
"Who'll beyond the hills away?"

* * * * *

Up, lads, thews that lie and cumber
Sunlit pallets never thrive;
Morns abed and daylight slumber
Were not meant for man alive.

Clay lies still, but blood's a rover;
Breath's a ware that will not keep.
Up, lad: when the journey's over
There'll be time enough to sleep.

A Voice from a Grave

I S my team ploughing,
That I was used to drive
And hear the harness jingle
When I was man alive?"

A. E. HOUSMAN

Ay, the horses trample,
The harness jingles now:
No change though you lie under
The land you used to plough.

"Is football playing
Along the river shore,
With lads to chase the leather,
Now I stand up no more?"

Ay, the ball is flying,
The lads play heart and soul:
The goal stands up, the keeper
Stands up to keep the goal.

"Is my girl happy,
That I thought hard to leave:
And has she tired of weeping
As she lies down at eve?"

Ay, she lies down lightly,
She lies not down to weep:
Your girl is well contented.
Be still, my lad, and sleep.

"Is my friend hearty,
Now I am thin and pine;
And has he found to sleep in
A better bed than mine?"

Yes, lad, I lie easy,
I lie as lads would choose:
I cheer a dead man's sweetheart,
Never ask me whose.

A Look into Water

OH, fair enough are sky and plain,
But I know fairer far:
Those are as beautiful again
That in the water are.

The pools and rivers wash so clean
The trees and clouds and air:
The like on earth was never seen,
And oh that I were there.

These are the thoughts I often think
As I stand gazing down
In act upon the cressy brink
To strip and dive and drown.

But in the golden-sanded brooks
And azure meres I spy
A silly lad that longs and looks
And wishes he were I.

Epitaph on an Army of Mercenaries

THESE, in the day when heaven was falling,
The hour when earth's foundations fled,
Followed their mercenary calling
And took their wages and are dead.

Their shoulders held the sky suspended;
They stood, and earth's foundations stay;
What God abandoned, these defended,
And saved the sum of things for pay.

Tell Me Not Here

TELL me not here, it needs not saying,
What tune the enchantress plays
In aftermaths of soft September
Or under blanching mays,
For she and I were long acquainted
And I knew all her ways.

On russet floors, by waters idle,
The pine lets fall its cone;
The cuckoo shouts all day at nothing
In leafy dells alone;
And traveller's joy beguiles in autumn
Hearts that have lost their own.

On acres of the seeded grasses
The changing burnish heaves;
Or marshalled under moons of harvest
Stand still all night the sheaves;
Or beeches strip in storms for winter
And stain the world with leaves.

Possess, as I possessed a season,
The countries I resign,
Where over elmy plains the highway
Would mount the hills and shine,
And full of shade the pillared forest
Would murmur and be mine.

A. E. HOUSMAN

For Nature, heartless, witless nature,
Will neither care nor know
What stranger's feet may find the meadow
And trespass there and go,
Nor ask among the dews of morning
If they are mine or no.

Be Still, My Soul

BE still, my soul, be still; the arms you bore are
brittle,
Earth and high heaven are fixed of old and founded
strong.

I think rather—call to thought, if now you grieve a
little,
The days when we had rest, O soul, for they were
long.

Men loved unkindness then, but lightless in the quarry
I slept and saw not; tears fell down, I did not mourn;
Sweat ran and blood sprang out and I was never sorry:
Then it was well with me, in days ere I was born.

Now, and I muse for why and never find the reason,
I pace the earth, and drink the air, and feel the sun.
Be still, be still, my soul; it is but for a season:
Let us endure an hour and see injustice done.

Ay, look: high heaven and earth ail from the prime
foundation;
All thoughts to rive the heart are here, and all are
vain;
Horror and scorn and hate and fear and indignation—
Oh, why did I awake? when shall I sleep again?

A. E. HOUSMAN

Chorus

FROM "FRAGMENT OF A GREEK TRAGEDY"

With few peers in the refinements of classical scholarship, A. E. Housman loves his Greek literature well enough to make merry with it. I reproduce a CHORUS from his "Fragment of a Greek Tragedy", published in the "Cornhill Magazine" of April, 1901. Some may feel that the sage meditation of the chorus is a trifle tautological, but few, let us hope, will dispute its truth!

IN speculation
I would not willingly acquire a name
For ill-digested thought;
But after pondering much
To this conclusion I at last have come:
Life is uncertain.
This truth I have written deep
In my reflective midriff
On tablets not of wax,
Not with a pen did I inscribe it there,
For many reasons: *Life, I say, is not*
A stranger to uncertainty.
Not from the flight of omen-yelling fowls
This fact did I discover,
Nor did the Delphic tripod bark it out,
Nor yet Dodona.
Its native ingenuity sufficed
My self-taught diaphragm.

Fancy's Knell

WHEN lads were home from labor
At Abdon under Clee
A man would call his neighbor
And both would send for me.
And where the light in lances
Across the mead was laid,
There to the dances
I fetched my flute and played.

Ours were idle pleasures,
Yet oh, content we were,
The young to wind the measures,
The old to heed the air;
And I to lift with playing
From tree and tower and steep
The light delaying,
And flute the sun to sleep.

The youth toward his fancy
Would turn his brow of tan,
And Tom would pair with Nancy
And Dick step off with Fan;
The girl would lift her glances
To his, and both be mute:
Well went the dances
At evening to the flute.

Wenlock Edge was umbered,
And bright was Abdon Burf;
And warm between them slumbered
The smooth green miles of turf;

A. E. HOUSMAN

Until from grass and clover
The upshot beam would fade,
And England over
Advanced the lofty shade.

The lofty shade advances,
I fetch my flute and play:
Come, lads, and learn the dances
And praise the tune to-day.
To-morrow, more's the pity,
Away we both must hie—
To air, the ditty;
And to earth I.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

ENGLAND, 1859—1907

THIS mystic poet, although he had been educated to be a physician, lived for years a drug-cursed vagabond on the streets of London. At one time he was a street peddler, who could find lodgings only in dingy corners and forlorn rookeries. All this time he clung desperately to his hope of winning recognition for his poems. His story is one of the darkest in the tragedy of genius.

Apparently there was no Heaven-made providence protecting him from disaster; but he found at last a man-made providence, a wise and tender providence in Alice and Wilfrid Meynell, who drew him out of the hell of the London slums, and gave him the social and economic environment needed for the blossoming of his extraordinary powers. Thompson touches the heart of this problem of providence when, in his famous poem, he makes the God say:

“Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.”

FRANCIS THOMPSON

So men have their important work to perform in creating and organizing a providence to shelter mankind. There is no full, ready-made providence protecting men.

A born poet, Thompson nevertheless needed education in his art. Frequently his lines move sluggishly like that river of pitch in Dante's *Inferno*—sluggishly when they should have flight and fire. He obstructs his verse movement with accumulations of obsolete and recondite words, which send one to the lexicon. His pages are full of sinuosities and ponderosities, which produce obscurations and unintelligibilities. But now and then a startling line flashes out of this chaos; and even when the words are unintelligible, we nevertheless get the feeling of vast mysteries in motion. If you wish to penetrate to the soul of Francis Thompson, you must try to understand, as Chesterton says, "his mountains of mystical detail, his occasional and unashamed weakness, his sudden and sacred blasphemies."

As a summing up of the poetic genius of Francis Thompson, we can perhaps turn nowhere else for so fine a statement as this one I find in Richard Le Gallienne's rich two volumes of *Retrospective Reviews*: "The fine frenzy, and the fine line: these are two root characteristics of Mr. Thompson's really remarkable poems. The fine frenzy, too, is becoming rare in recent poetry, if not absolutely extinct. Our poets grow sober and self-conscious. They seem to have taken the pledge against the strong waters of Hippocrene, and they never allow any emotion to carry them off their feet. Mr. Thompson, however, is entirely possessed with the old-fashioned 'divine afflatus.' One has seldom seen a poet more wildly abandoned to his rapture, more absorbed in the trance of his ecstasy. When the irresistible moment comes, he throws himself upon his mood as a glad swimmer gives himself to the waves, careless whither the strong tide carries him, knowing only the wild joy of the laughing waters and the rainbow spray. He shouts, as it were, for mere gladness, in the welter of wonderful words, and he dives swift and fear-

FRANCIS THOMPSON

less to fetch his deep-sea fancies. Again, we find him, like some venturesome lark, caught up in a lyric rapture to the very brink of the sky. Courageous little rival of the morning star! When weak men venture on these vagaries, they drown or topple down the sky; but Mr. Thompson is a strong swimmer and a sure flyer. His very daring, as in all such feats, pulls him through, and hyperboles which in other hands had seemed merely absurd, in his delight us as examples of that 'fine excess' which is one of the most enthralling of the many enchantments of poetry. Intoxication as a Bacchante's, the love of words for their own sake, the willingness to whirl off with them to any orgies of fancy they may suggest, a striking vocabulary of strange out-of-the-way words (long, curious, serpent-spotted Latinisms, or racy 'gipsies of speech' from country lanes) a great command of impressive rhythm and rich color, an Oriental exuberance and extravagance of imagery, directed by a profound Catholic mysticism, and over all an irresistible glamor of melody: these are some of the qualities which go to compose these strangely beautiful poems. One thinks of *Solomon's Song* and of Crashaw as one reads. Indeed Mr. Thompson must simply be Crashaw born again, but born greater."

The Hound of Heaven

The religious exaltation of Francis Thompson rises to a great height in his famous poem, "The Hound of Heaven", that mystic song of the sinner fleeing from the pursuing Love of Christ. Coventry Patmore took the ground that "it is one of the few great odes of which our language can boast." And Burne-Jones said that, since Rossetti's "The Blessed Damozel", no mystical words had so touched him as "The Hound of Heaven."

FRANCIS THOMPSON

I FLED Him, down the nights and down the days;
I fled Him, down the arches of the years;
I fled Him, down the labyrinthine ways
Of my own mind; and in the midst of tears
I hid from Him, and under running laughter.
Up vistaed hopes I sped;
And shot, precipitated
Adown Titanic glooms of chasmèd fears,
From those strong Feet that followed, followed after.
But with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
They beat—and a Voice beat
More instant than the Feet—
“All things betray thee, who betrayest Me.”

I pleaded, outlaw-wise,
By many a hearted casement, curtained red,
Trellised with intertwining charities;
(For, though I knew His love Who followèd,
Yet was I sore adread
Lest, having Him, I must have naught beside);
But, if one little casement parted wide,
The gust of His approach would clash it to.
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Across the margent of the world I fled,
And troubled the gold gateways of the stars,
Smiting for shelter on their clangèd bars;
Fretted to dulcet jars
And silvern chatter the pale ports o' the moon.
I said to dawn, “Be sudden;” to eve, “Be soon;
With thy young skiey blossoms heap me over
From this tremendous Lover!
Float thy vague veil about me, lest He see!”

FRANCIS THOMPSON

I tempted all His servitors, but to find
My own betrayal in their constancy,
In faith to Him their fickleness to me,
Their traitorous trueness, and their loyal deceit.
To all swift things for swiftness did I sue;
Clung to the whistling mane of every wind.
But whether they swept, smoothly fleet,
The long savannahs of the blue;
Or whether, Thunder-driven,
They clanged his chariot 'thwart a heaven
Plashy with flying lightnings round the spurn o' their
feet:
Fear wist not to evade, as Love wist to pursue.
Still with unhurrying chase,
And unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy,
Came on the following Feet,
And a Voice above their beat—
“Naught shelters thee, who wilt not shelter Me.”

I sought no more that after which I strayed
In face of man or maid;
But still within the little children's eyes
Seems something, something that replies;
They, at least are for me, surely for me!
I turned me to them very wistfully;
But, just as their young eyes grew sudden fair
With dawning answers there,
Their angel plucked them from me by the hair.
“Come then, ye other children, Nature's—share
With me” (said I) “your delicate fellowship;
Let me greet you lip to lip,
Let me twine you with caresses,
Wantoning
With our Lady-Mother's vagrant tresses,

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Banqueting

With her in her wind-walled palace,
Underneath her azure daïs,
Quaffing, as your taintless way is,
From a chalice

Lucent weeping out of the dayspring."

So it was done:

I in their delicate fellowship was one—

Drew the bolt of Nature's secrecies.

I knew all the swift importings

On the wilful face of skies,

I knew how the clouds arise

Spumèd of the wild sea-snortings;

All that's born or dies

Rose and drooped with—made them shapers
Of mine own moods, or wailful or divine—

With them joyed and was bereaven.

I was heavy with the Even,

When she lit her glimmering tapers

Round the day's dead sanctities.

I laughed in the Morning's eyes.

I triumphed and I saddened with all weather,

Heaven and I wept together,

And its sweet tears were salt with mortal mine:

Against the red throb of its sunset-heart

I laid my own to beat,

And share commingling heat;

But not by that, by that, was eased my human smart.

In vain my tears were wet on Heaven's gray cheek.

For ah! we know not what each other says,

These things and I; in sound *I* speak—

Their sound is but their stir, they speak by silences.

Nature, poor stepdame, cannot slake my drouth;

Let her, if she would owe me,

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Drop yon blue bosom-veil of sky, and show me
The breasts o' her tenderness:
Never did any milk of hers once bless
My thirsting mouth.
Nigh and dry draws the chase,
With unperturbèd pace,
Deliberate speed, majestic instancy;
And past those noisèd Feet
A voice comes yet more fleet—
"Lo! naught contents thee, who content'st not
Me."

Naked I wait Thy love's uplifted stroke!
My harness piece by piece Thou hast hewn from me,
And smitten me to my knee;
I am defenseless utterly.
I slept, methinks, and woke,
And, slowly gazing, find me stripped in sleep.
In the rash lustihood of my young powers,
I shook the pillaring hours
And pulled my life upon me; grimed with smears
I stand amid the dust o' the mounded years—
My mangled youth lies dead beneath the heap.
My days have crackled and gone up in smoke,
Have puffed and burst as sun-starts on a stream.
Yea, faileth now even dream
The dreamer, and the lute the lutanist;
Even the linked fantasies, in whose blossomy twist
I swung the earth a trinket at my wrist,
Are yielding; cords of all too weak account
For earth with heavy griefs so overplussed.
Ah! is Thy love indeed
A weed, albeit an amaranthine weed.
Suffering no flowers except its own to mount?
Ah! must—

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Designer infinite!—

Ah! must Thou char the wood ere Thou canst limn
with it?

My freshness spent its wavering shower i' the dust:

And now my heart is as a broken fount,

Wherein tear-drippings stagnate, spilt down ever

From the dank thoughts that shiver

Upon the sighful branches of my mind.

Such is; what is to be?

The pulp so bitter, how shall taste the rind?

I dimly guess what Time in mists confounds:

Yet ever and anon a trumpet sounds

From the hid battlements of Eternity;

Those shaken mists a space unsettle, then

Round the half-glimpstèd turrets slowly wash again.

But not ere him who summoneth

I first have seen, enwound

With glooming robes purpureal, cypress-crowned;

His name I know, and what his trumpet saith.

Whether man's heart or life it be that yields

Thee harvest, must Thy harvest fields

Be dunged with rotten death?

Now of that long pursuit

Comes on at hand the bruit;

That Voice is round me like a bursting sea.

“And is thy earth so marred,

Shattered in shard on shard?

Lo, all things fly thee, for thou flyest Me!

Strange, piteous, futile thing,

Wherefore should any set thee love apart?

Seeing none but I makes much of naught” (He said)

“And human love needs human meriting:

How hast thou merited—

Of all man's clotted clay the dingiest clot?

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Alack, thou knowest not
How little worthy of any love thou art!
Whom wilt thou find to love ignoble thee
Save Me, save only Me?
All which I took from thee, I did but take,
Not for thy harms,
But just that thou might'st seek it in My arms.
All which thy child's mistake
Fancies as lost, I have stored for thee at home;
Rise, clasp My hand, and come!"
Halts by me that footfall:
Is my gloom, after all,
Shade of His hand, outstretched caressingly?
"Ah, fondest, blindest, weakest,
I am He Whom thou seekest!
Thou dravest love from thee, who dravest Me."

Daisy

WHERE the thistle lifts a purple crown
Six foot out of the turf,
And the harebell shakes on the windy hill—
O the breath of the distant surf!

The hills look over on the South,
And southward dreams the sea;
And with the sea-breeze hand in hand
Came innocence and she.

Where 'mid the gorse the raspberry
Red for the gatherer springs,
Two children did we stray and talk
Wise, idle, childish things.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

She listened with big-lipped surprise,
Breast-deep 'mid flower and spine:
Her skin was like a grape, whose veins
Run snow instead of wine.

She knew not those sweet words she spake,
Nor knew her own sweet way;
But there's never a bird, so sweet a song
Thronged in whose throat that day.

Oh, there were flowers in Storrington
On the turf and on the spray;
But the sweetest flower on Sussex hills
Was the daisy-flower that day!

Her beauty smoothed earth's furrowed face
She gave me tokens three—
A look, a word of her winsome mouth,
And a wild raspberry.

A berry red, a guileless look,
A still word—strings of sand!
And yet they made my wild, wild heart
Fly down to her little hand.

For standing artless as the air,
And candid as the skies,
She took the berries with her hand,
And the love with her sweet eyes.

The fairest things have fleetest end,
Their scent survives their close:
But the rose's scent is bitterness
To him that loved the rose.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

She looked a little wistfully,
Then went her sunshine way:
The sea's eye had a mist on it,
And the leaves fell from the day.

She went her unremembering way,
She went and left in me
The pang of all the partings gone
And partings yet to be.

She left me marvelling why my soul
Was sad that she was glad;
At all the sadness in the sweet,
The sweetness in the sad.

Still, still I seemed to see her, still
Look up with soft replies,
And take the berries with her hand,
And the love with her lovely eyes.

Nothing begins, and nothing ends,
That is not paid with moan;
For we are born in others' pain,
And perish in our own.

Arab Love-Song

THE hunchèd camels of the night
Trouble the bright
And silver waters of the moon.
The maiden of the moon will soon
Through heaven stray and sing,
Star gathering.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Now while the dark about our love is strewn,
Light of my dark, blood of my heart, O come!
And night will catch her breath up and be dumb.

Leave thy father, leave thy mother
And thy brother;
Leave the black tents of thy tribe apart!
Am I not thy father and thy brother,
And thy mother?
And thou—what needest with thy tribe's black tents
Who hast the red pavilion of my heart?

To a Snow-Flake

WHAT heart could have thought you?
Past our devisal
(O filigree petal!)
Fashioned so purely,
Fragilely, surely,
From what Paradisal
Imagineless metal,
Too costly for cost?
Who hammered you, wrought you,
From argentine vapor?
"God was my shaper.
Passing surmisal,
He hammered, He wrought me,
From curled silver vapor,
To lust of His mind;
Thou could'st not have thought me!
So purely, so palely,
Tinily, surely,
Mightily, frailly,

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Insculped and embossed,
With His hammer of wind,
And His graver of frost."

In No Strange Land

"The Kingdom of God is within you"

O WORLD invisible, we view thee,
O world intangible, we touch thee,
O world unknowable, we know thee,
Inapprehensible, we clutch thee!

Does the fish soar to find the ocean,
The eagle plunge to find the air—
That we ask of the stars in motion
If they have rumor of thee there?

Not where the wheeling systems darken,
And our benumbed conceiving soars!
The drift of pinions, would we hearken,
Beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.

The angels keep their ancient places;
Turn but a stone, and start a wing!
'Tis ye, 'tis your estrangèd faces,
That miss the many-splendored thing.

But (when so sad thou canst not sadder)
Cry—and upon thy so sore loss
Shall shine the traffic of Jacob's ladder
Pitched betwixt Heaven and Charing Cross.

FRANCIS THOMPSON

To Olivia

I FEAR to love thee, Sweet, because
Love's the ambassador of loss;
White flake of childhood, clinging so
To my soiled raiment, thy shy snow
At tenderest touch will shrink and go.
Love me not, delightful child.
My heart, by many snares beguiled,
Has grown timorous and wild.
It would fear thee not at all,
Wert thou not so harmless-small.
Because thy arrows, not yet dire,
Are still unbarbed with destined fire,
I fear thee more than hadst thou stood
Full-panoplied in womanhood.

From "Sister Songs"

Speaking of these poems, Richard Le Gallienne again says: "For many, Mr. Thompson's wild euphuism, his abandonment to the fine frenzy, careless of the trim laws of poetical 'restraint', his ecstatic mysticism, must make his poetry a sealed book; though 'the appointed knight' will love it for these very characteristics, and will trust that Mr. Thompson will never abate a jot of his humor to please any critic whatsoever. Extravagance is of the essence of his poetry, and the blemishes of his style are the inevitable defects of his great and fascinating merits."

A KISS? for a child's kiss?
Aye, goddess, even for this.
Once, bright Sylviola! in days not far,
Once—in that nightmare-time which still doth haunt

FRANCIS THOMPSON

My dreams, a grim, unbidden visitant—

Forlorn, and faint, and stark,

I had endured through watches of the dark

The abashless inquisition of each star,

Yea, was the outcast mark

Of all those heavenly passers' scrutiny;

Stood bound and helplessly

For Time to shoot his barbèd minutes at me;

Suffered the trampling hoof of every hour

In Night's slow-wheelèd car;

Until the tardy Dawn dragged me at length

From under the dread wheels; and, bled of strength,

I waited the inevitable last.

Then came there past

A child; like thee, a spring-flower; but a flower

Fallen from the budded coronal of Spring,

And through the city-streets blown withering!—

And of her own scant pittance did she give,

That I might eat and live;

Then fled, a swift and trackless fugitive.

Therefore I kissed in thee

The heart of childhood, so divine for me;

And her, through what sore ways,

And what unchildish days,

Borne from me now, as then, a trackless fugitive.

Therefore I kissed in thee

Her, child! and innocence,

And spring, and all things that have gone from me,

And that shall never be;

All vanished hopes, and all most hopeless bliss,

Came with thee to my kiss.

And ah! so long myself had strayed afar

From child and woman, and the boon earth's green,

And all wherewith life's face is fair beseen;

Journeying its journey bare

FRANCIS THOMPSON

Five suns, except of the all-kissing sun
 Unkissed of one;
 Almost I had forgot
 The healing harms,
And whitest witchery, a-lurk in that
Authentic cestus of two girdling arms;
 And I remembered not
 The subtle sanctities which dart
From childish lips' unvalued precious brush,
Nor how it makes the sudden lilies push
 Between the loosening fibres of the heart.
 Then, that thy little kiss
 Should be to me all this,
Let workaday wisdom blink sage lids thereat;
Which towers a flight three hedgerows high, poor bat!
 And straightway charts me out the empyreal air.
Its chart I wing not by, its canon of worth
Scorn not, nor reck though mine should breed it mirth;
And howso thou and I may be disjoint,
Yet still my falcon spirit makes her point
 Over the covert where
Thou, sweetest quarry, hast put in from her!

ERNEST RHYS

ENGLAND, 1859—

Dagonet's Canzonet

A QUEEN lived in the South;
And music was her mouth,
And sunshine was her hair,
By day, and all the night
The drowsy embers there
Remembered still the light;
My soul, was she not fair!

But for her eyes—they made
An iron man afraid:
Like sky-blue pools they were,
Watching the sky that knew
Itself transmuted there
Light blue, or deeper blue;
My soul, was she not fair!

The lifting of her hands
Made laughter in the lands
Where the sun is, in the South;
But my soul learnt sorrow there
In the secrets of her mouth,
Her eyes, her hands, her hair:
O soul, was she not fair!

ERNEST RHYS

Words

WORDS, like fine flowers, have their colors too:
What do you say to crimson words and
yellow;

And what to opal, emerald, pale blue?

And elvish gules?—he is a glorious fellow.

Think of the purple hung in Elsinore,

Or call it black, and close your eyes to see:

Go look for amber then on Lochlyn shore

And drag a sunbeam out of Arcady.

And who of Rosamund or Rosalind

Can part the rosy-petalled syllables?

For women's names keep murmuring like the wind

The hidden things that none for ever tells.

Last, to forego soft beauty, take the sword,

And see the blue steel redden at the word.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

CANADA, 1860—

THERE was a time when Roberts bid fair to be the major singer of his native Canada, but as the years have gone by he has developed rather into a master of poetic prose. His *Heart of the Ancient Wood* and *The Kindred of the Wild* are powerful pictures of wilderness life. His *Collected Poems* appeared in 1900.

The Deserted City

THERE lies a little city leagues away.
Its wharves the green sea washes all day long.
Its busy, sun-bright wharves with sailors' song
And clamor of trade ring loud the live-long day.
Into the happy harbor hastening, gay
With press of snowy canvas, tall ships throng.
The peopled streets to blithe-eyed Peace belong,
Glad housed beneath these crowding roofs of grey.

'Twas long ago this city prospered so,
For yesterday a woman died therein.
Since when the wharves are idle fallen, I know,
And in the streets is hushed the pleasant din.
The thronging ships have been, the songs have been:
Since yesterday it is so long ago.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

The Wrestler

WHEN God sends out His company to travel
through the stars,
There is every kind of wonder in the show:
There is every kind of animal behind the prison bars,
With riders in a many-colored row.
The master showman, Time, has a strange trick of
rhyme,
And the clown's most ribald jest is a tear;
But the best drawing card is the Wrestler, huge and
hard,
Who can fill the tent at any time of year.

His eye is on the crowd, and he beckons with his hand,
With authoritative finger, and they come.
The rules of the game they do not understand,
But they go as in a dream, and are dumb.
They would fain say him Nay, and they look the other
way,
Till at last to the ropes they cling.
But he throws them one by one till the show for them
is done,
In the blood-red dust of the ring.

There's none to shun his challenge, they must meet him
soon or late,
And he knows a cunning trick for all heels.
The king's haughty crown drops in jeers from his pate
As the hold closes on him, and he reels.
The burly and the proud, the braggarts of the crowd,
Every one of them he topples down in thunder.
His grip grows mild for the dotard and the child,
But alike they must all go under.

CHARLES G. D. ROBERTS

Oh, many a mighty foeman would try a fall with him—
Persepolis and Babylon and Rome,
Assyria and Sardis, they see their fame grow dim,
As he tumbles in the dust every dome.
At length will come an hour when the stars shall feel
 his power,
And he shall have his will upon the sun.
Ere we know what he's about the stars will be put out,
And the wonder of the show will be undone.

